

# EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM (TAUGHT PROGRAMMES)



External Examiners are required to complete and submit Reports at least annually and within one month of the programme Examining Board.

Completed External Examiner Report Forms should be sent to:

[ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk)

Arrangements for the payment of fees and expenses will be made upon receipt of this Report Form and upon receipt in hard copy of a completed External Examiner Claim Form for Reimbursement of Fees and Expenses and expenses receipts. This Report Form and the associated Claim Form may be downloaded at:

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/regis/ifs/exex/rep/index.html>

External Examiner Reports are made available in full to students. For this reason, and in accordance with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, individual staff and students should not be named within the Report.

Please note that External Examiner reports are circulated widely in order that any necessary action can be taken. A copy of the final report of an External Examiner will also be passed to their successor.

Cardiff University prefers External Examiners to complete their Report Forms electronically and to submit them by email as indicated above. If, for any reason an External Examiner prefers to provide their report in hard copy it should be sent to *Mr. Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE.*

**PAYMENT OF FEES CANNOT BE AUTHORISED UNTIL RECEIPT OF THIS COMPLETED FORM  
AND THE ASSOCIATED CLAIM FORM**

Name of External Examiner: Prof. Clare Bryant

Institution:

Programme of study and subject(s) examined: Master of Research in Biosciences

Academic Year/Session to which this report applies: 2013/14

### Freedom of Information Act

The University is a public authority and therefore subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The University may therefore be required to publish the whole or parts of any reports and correspondence submitted by its External Examiners. The University also reserves the right to choose to publish the whole or parts of any reports submitted by its External Examiners.

## SECTION A

### 1.1 Programme Structure

*Comment upon the appropriateness of the structure and content of the programme in relation to its stated aims, learning outcomes and programme specification (if available).*

The program is remains well organised and meets the aims as stated in the course handbook. The course provides a strong background in basic research techniques including experimental design, statistical analysis and experimental methodologies. Some of the students felt there was a little inconsistency in marking between assessors the research skills module, but these criticisms were relatively minor. The gant chart, poster, grant writing and public communication sections are important skills for the students to acquire in order to develop a research career. The MRes course is popular with the students and the general feedback from them was that the mix of ecology and biomedical science was a good one. The students appreciated that lessons learnt in one discipline were readily transferrable to the other and this was seen as a strength by the majority of students. The interview process was a good mechanism by which student performance can be monitored and achievement levels compared. The course material provides a good basis for a research training and the mathematical elements of the course are important in a research environment where multi-disciplinary work is becoming increasingly important. The students continue to find the use of the R statistics and modelling package challenging but they all felt the course explained the package well and they all eventually became competent in its use. The bioinformatics module currently presents some problems and needs refining. In particular the interface between the theory (which was felt to be excellent by the students) and the practical application is currently too wide. The students felt they needed a basic introduction to using the software packages to get the most out of the rest of the bioinformatics practical work. The supervisor, like a number of the staff in Cardiff, is expected to teach too many concurrently running courses meaning he was often doubled booked. Better communication between the bioinformatics supervisor, the demonstrators and the students could probably resolve these issues. More feedback between the staff and students during the bioinformatics module was requested. General issues were raised about time tabling of rooms. Despite early MRes room bookings these were removed by undergraduate or medical school administrators with no notice to the MRes staff such that teachers and students arrived at classes to find other courses in the rooms they had booked. This is not acceptable for the staff or students. Clarity on whether the four year PhD students who participated in course were required to pass would be useful. The students continue to enthuse about the quality of the MRes course and its staff.

### 1.2 Comparability of Standards

*Comment upon the comparability of the standards of the programme with similar programmes nationally and the performance of the students in relation to their peers on similar programmes. In those subject areas where a subject benchmark statement is available, have the students demonstrated achievement of the appropriate benchmark standard*

I have not examined on an MRes course before so it is not possible for me to draw any comparisons with other students. There are no applicable benchmarks.

### 1.3 The Examination Process

*Comment upon the appropriateness of the assessment methods and balance between them (i.e. unseen written papers, essays/dissertations, orals, etc), the marking scheme, procedure for the classification of the award and the overall conduct and fairness of the examination and assessment processes.*

The assessment methods for the taught component were appropriate and fair. The gradings were appropriate for this stage of the course.

**SECTION A (Continued)**

**1.4 How did procedures/arrangements compare this year with previous years? Have any or all of the recommendations made by you or your predecessor last year been actioned?**

The arrangements this year were excellent and very similar to the previous year's assessment procedures. All the recommendations made by the other external and myself were implemented including the merit system of marking and inclusion of a gant chart for student time management. The MRes staff always take our recommendations very seriously as well as acting on the student feedback.

**1.5 If this is your first year as External Examiner please comment upon whether the school induction activities (if applicable), External Examiner Handbook and other documentation provided helped you to fulfil your role and responsibilities as an External Examiner. Are there any ways in which the process could be improved?**

N/A

**1.6 Please give examples, if appropriate, of good or noteworthy practice in the following areas which you wish to draw to the wider attention of the University:**

- (i) alignment of learning outcomes with assessment tasks;**
- (ii) methods of enhancing consistency of marking;**
- (iii) explicitness of information relating to assessment;**
- (iv) other practice in the structure, delivery and assessment of the programme.**

This is an outstanding MRes course which is designed specifically to make the students uniquely placed to follow a research career. The bioscience, ecology and public health components give the student a broad base to work from. The experimental design and mathematical elements of the course are unusual and useful in shaping how a student thinks about a research project. The biomedical spread of techniques, communication and technical skills will be very helpful to students when thinking about their research projects and how they may address the questions they are attempting to answer in their practical work. The MRes staff provide excellent feedback to the students and refine the course in response to student comments. The MRes staff always take into account and action recommendations by the external examiners.

**1.7 If this is your final year as External Examiner please provide an overview of your period of office which may be passed on to your successor.**

N/A

**SECTION B**

Please respond to the following questions by ticking the appropriate box. Please make appropriate comments if your answers are 'No'.

<b>Programme/Course Information</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
2.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the programme/course contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	X		
<b>2.2 Comments</b>				
<b>Examination Question Papers</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
2.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			X
2.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions satisfactory?			X
2.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			X
2.6	Were you afforded access to a sample of in-course assessments?			X
<b>2.7 Comments</b>				
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
2.8	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			X
2.9	Were the methods of assessment well balanced and fair? Did they reflect the programme's objectives?			X
2.10	Were examination/assessment procedures and the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			X
2.11	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			X
2.12	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			X
2.13	Were satisfactory arrangements made for you to conduct any necessary <i>viva voce</i> examinations?			X
<b>2.14 Comments</b>				

<b>SECTION B (Continued)</b>				
<b>Coursework/Dissertations/Projects</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
2.15	Was the choice and assessment of coursework/dissertations/projects satisfactory?	X		
2.16	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	X		
<b>2.17 Comments</b>				
More feedback required earlier in the module for the bioinformatics students				
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
2.18	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			X
2.19	Was the assessment of such work satisfactory?			X
<b>2.20 Comments</b>				
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
2.21	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	X		
2.22	Was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?	X		
2.23	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the programme?		X	
2.24	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(s) of Study and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	X		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
2.25	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board (i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees)?			X
2.26	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			X
2.27	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			X
<b>2.28 Comments</b>				
Signed: _____ Date: 19 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2014				
Please return this report by email to: <a href="mailto:ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk">ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk</a>				
Your fee and expenses claim form, and any reports which cannot be emailed, should be sent to: Mr. Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE.				