

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Christopher Parris		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Anglia Ruskin University, School of Life Sciences		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	MSc Cancer Biology and Therapeutics		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2018-19	Date of Report:	8.11.2019

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the dissertation stage Examining Board in the case of postgraduate Master's programmes).

Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

The programme structure is highly appropriate. The course structure ensures that there is sufficient learning in the theoretical aspects of cancer biology and therapeutics (treatment) and practical/research/laboratory skill. This is bolstered by the enhancement of academic skills (critical evaluation of scientific literature, computational work and bioinformatics). Overall, the balance between subject specific learning and practical/research skills is appropriate and represents a well-balanced curriculum.

2. Academic Standards (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

The academic standards of this course are clearly at MSc level and comparable to other institutions where I have external examining experience. In my last report, I had suggested that the subject team consider a PSRB accreditation event possibly with the Royal Society of Biology. I am not aware if this has been taken forward.

3. The Assessment Process (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

The breadth and range of the assessment types in this MSc course are varied and stretching and highly appropriate. While I was able to view a sufficient number of exam scripts and coursework assignment I did find some of the marking practices confusing. Examples below.

1. PHT801: Cellular and Molecular Biology of Cancer. Part A of this exam in an MCQ assessment. However, these were not included in the exam scripts and I would like to have reviewed a couple of these scripts. For part B of this exam (short answers), the mark for part A was written on the front of the exam paper for part B, for some students but not others. In short, the marks for all components of an exam should be included on a summary spreadsheet and I would feel more at ease if all exam scripts were anonymised. Exam mark reporting for this module was somewhat haphazard.
2. PHT806, Statistics and Calculations: I could not easily navigate my way around these papers. Poorly labelled scripts where some papers had students' first name on the script but not others. Please add a cover sheet to each answer paper with the student number. No names should be associated with any scripts and should be anonymised. Indicate the mark for each component of the examination/assignment on the cover sheet. Examiners comments were also difficult to read and follow in some cases. Did not have all of the scripts to select samples for verification of marks?
3. Variation in the level of feedback on exam answer scripts and coursework assignments. Some marks were justified by *in situ* comments and followed by a summary sentence (which is good practice). Other scripts were marked up by ticks and crosses (poor practice). It is essential that examiners justify their marks with short supporting statements on exam scripts and coursework assignments.

4. Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable) (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

[Where possible please complete this section following the dissertation examining board determining the final award.]

There was some variation in the marking of dissertations. For example, there was one dissertation that I have asked to be marked by a third marker because I did not agree with the mark given by the primary and secondary assessor. It was my belief that the mark was too high for the quality of the thesis. The course team were very happy to comply with this request and I will be satisfied with the outcome in whatever decision the assessors come to. There was also variation in the presentation style and quality of the dissertations and it seems as if different local rules were being applied depending on which lab and supervisor the student was assigned to. It was recommended to the course team to consider a training session for supervisors, to ensure universal implementation of rules and regulations for the preparation and submission of dissertations. In addition, it might be appropriate to conduct a marking calibration exercise for supervisors to ensure marking is guided by University grade descriptors.

5. Year-on-Year Comments

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

Nothing to report

6. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided by the programme team and supporting

information, visits to School, ability to meet with students, arrangements for accessing work to review)

Not applicable

7. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

The use of a varied assessment portfolio to fully test student knowledge. Stretching assessment.

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course information				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			NA
Commenting on draft examination question papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Examination scripts				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?		N See above	
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?		N See above	
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
Coursework and practical assessments				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?		N See above	
Clinical examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		

Examining board meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
9.19	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 and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	Y		
Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE

