

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013-2014 - MRes in Biosciences

Dear Professor Burslem,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Cardiff School of Biosciences 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

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School. The following response has been provided on behalf of the School.

"The School of Biosciences would like to thank Professor Burslem for his supportive and constructive comments, both in this report and in person throughout his period of office as External Examiner. The course team were particularly pleased that multiple instances of good practice were noted such as the diversity of assessment methods and style and quality of written feedback. These positive comments will be disseminated to staff and students.

We will address his particular concerns below.

1. [1] the External Examiner's report of, and comments on, differing student perceptions of the content of Research Techniques:

The module Research Techniques in Bioscience (BIT002) covers a wide range of research methodologies that reflect current activity in biosciences and basic knowledge across this broad range of techniques is an asset for any student seeking employment or further higher-level study in bioscience research. To address the concerns voiced by students the module team will adjust the assessments within this module (Part 2) such that all students will undertake the ecological assessment and either a stem cell or neuroscience assessment. This adjustment will ensure all students are challenged with an assignment that will be unfamiliar to them and hence ensure an equitable level of assessment for both laboratory-based Biosciences disciplines and field ecology.

2. [1.4] Double Booking of Rooms:

Following the External Examiners' visit in January 2014, a meeting of key staff (both administrative and academic) was held to resolve the double booking of rooms in the School of Biosciences. Administrators and academics have been instructed in the process of room booking using the university Scientia system. Provisional room bookings are in place for the academic session 2014-15, all staff (undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes) involved are aware that room booking should be monitored throughout the summer period. With this increased understanding of the room booking system we do not envisage a problem with double booking of rooms during the 2014-15 session.

3. [1.4] Logistical problems in the delivery and support of students in bioinformatics:

The issues that had arisen during the course of the autumn semester teaching of Bioinformatics (BIT010) were discussed at length at the January Exam board. The module team was aware of the problems (double-room bookings and bioinformatics practical work) and had duly highlighted these at Scheme Board meetings. The module content is currently under review to develop teaching strategies to ensure

that the students are equipped to handle the content and assessments demanded in the Bioinformatics route of this module (BIT010).”

Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School's provision including:

- a. **[1, 2 and 3] your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;**
- b. **[6] your commendation of aspects of the programme, including the diversity of assessment methods and styles and the quality of written feedback to students.**

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

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 Registry web pages and will be available publically.

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.

Dr C B Turner
Director of Student Services and Governance