



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr. Dylan Gwynn-Jones		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Aberystwyth University		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Biological Sciences		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016/2017	Date of Report:	21 st of June 2017

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the **taught 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 Data Protection Act (1998).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

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

Cardiff Biosciences continues to offer a good range of interesting and academically challenging modules structured into well designed and academically sound degrees in the Biological Sciences. Degrees provide a very good range of skills and learning experience and respond to the benchmark statements for their respective subjects. Within the degrees there is appropriate content, depth and learning opportunity. A professional training year is integrated into all degree subjects and this offers excellent opportunity for students to engage in relevant vocational training.

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

For the modules inspected the academic standards are high and in line with what I would expect at level 5/6 and similar to those in other equivalent Institutions. I continue to be impressed by some of the assignments completed offering a range of skills and challenges. Material is up to date and there is clear evidence that teaching is informed by research activity within the Department. Students are responding well

to assignments and the majority score 2(1) marks or higher. I was again impressed by the synthesis present in some of the higher mark assessments.

This year I looked at a wide range of modules but very closely at four specific modules (BI3134, B3133, BI3110 and B3130). These modules offered a diversity of assessment topics and the students overall responded well.

I also blind marked several dissertations and generally my marks matched very closely to those awarded.

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

The processes in place were generally easy to follow and well organised although some material was not easy to access (e.g. Dissertations). Annotations could be found on all coursework inspected but in some cases too many comments were presented. Not all included a final overview comment.

For the Dissertation module some markers provided feedback on the detailed sheet plus they also used quickmarking. I could see no reason in engaging in the latter and suggest that the sheet alone is acceptable.

Staff need to meet and agree as a group on how much feedback they should provide in Turnitin so that processes are entirely consistent. This is important as too many comments can overwhelm students and for staff time available for marking does have limits.

For exam scripts there was very clear evidence of annotations, feedback and the marks awarded on scripts / reports matched the work presented. Final comments were comprehensive and in the majority of cases matched closely against the text in the marking criteria. Overall, I felt that the staff were possibly producing too many comments. In one instance a third of the text on a page (for a 2(2) exam script) was staff comments. There is a need to agree on the level of comments (Min / Max) and try to be consistent between modules.

There was clear evidence of the moderation present throughout.

I again looked at feedback in response to NSS 2015 and 2016 and was overall satisfied with the level of feedback given. Possibly staff could sometimes rephrase text to emphasise that it was feedback. Annotations were generally clear and correct and this helped the reader/student understand and establish why a particular mark had been awarded.

Last year I raised concern about the disappointing number of students that actually looked at their feedback. The pattern was the similar for the 2016/2017 cohort. The percentage of students looking at module feedback was at highest 52% and the lowest was 0%. I again question how some students can effectively respond to NSS about the level of feedback provided.

Given the very low level of response, I would recommend that Cardiff Biosciences should look at developing a system whereby students are not allowed to submit work until they have inspected feedback from previous assignments. This may need some thought due to bunched deadlines and could simply be that they can only progress into a Semester after looking at 80% of the feedback from the previous one. The

electronic nature of submission allows some sort of system to be introduced and staff need to discuss this. I also encourage dialogue between staff-student groups and central monitoring of student engagement with feedback.

Finally, again in 2017 and area of unanimous concern raised again by the examiners on the sequential rounding of marks at Cardiff – this was discussed in the exam board as the University registry has not adequately responded to this point from 2016.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

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

This was my second year as examiner and the processes are consistent within and between modules and years. There was continued evidence of good practice.

Some key points include:

- Student numbers continue to be high on some popular modules in year 3.
- Use of the upper range for marking was better this year and I did see some exceptional work awarded >90%.
- Overall referencing has continued to improve but some students need to work on this element.
- There remains an issue with students responding to feedback (see above).

5. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

N/A

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

- a. Consistent, clear and thorough annotations on the majority of coursework inspected.
- b. Clear marking criteria.
- c. Good feedback that explains clearly why a particular mark had been awarded.
- d. Evidence of staff research backgrounds having a positive influence on teaching via examples used and standard of work expected.

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

N/A

8. 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				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	X		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		X	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	X		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	X		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	X		
Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	X		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	X		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	X		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	X		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	X		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	X		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	X		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	X		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	X		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			X
Sampling of Work				X

8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?			X
Examining Board Meeting				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	X		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	X		
8.19	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?	X		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			X
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			X
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			X
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
8.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			X
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			X
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			X
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			X
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			X
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			X
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			X
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			
	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