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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Marcello Riggio		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Glasgow		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BDS (Part 2A) – Oral Ecosystems (year 2; DE2001)		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2018-2019	Date of Report:	23/08/2019

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board.

**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)

Oral Ecosystems is one of three themes in year 2 of the BDS curriculum (the others are Foundation and Clinical Dentistry), and collectively contribute to the Primary BDS Part 2 examination.

The programme structure and content are very good, with a wide range of summative assessment methods (see section 2) being utilised (essays, MSA, practical, coursework). This ensures that a wide depth and breadth of knowledge is assessed.

Students are exposed to a wide range of high quality teaching and learning methods.

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

- I to assessed the first diet of examinations on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and had an opportunity to look at a variety of written exam scripts in both Oral Ecosystems and Foundation: Basic Sciences. This focussed mainly on borderline failing candidates, but the exam scripts of a few high achievement candidates were also

examined. The number of failing candidates for each course assessment was as follows (figures for 2017-18 are denoted in brackets for comparative purposes):

- Poster Presentation Project: 1 (3)
  - Extended Essay: 0 (11)
  - Basic Sciences ICA: N/A (22)
  - Oral Ecosystems ICA: 0 (9)
  - Foundation: Basic Sciences (written paper): 15 (4)
  - Oral Ecosystems (written paper): 4 (8)
  - Clinical: 0 (0)
  - Practical: 7 (1)
- It was pleasing to note that once again all candidates passed the Clinical component. Even more impressive was the fact that all candidates passed the Extended Essay and the Oral Ecosystems in-course assessment (ICA) (which had 11 and nine failing candidates in 2017-18, respectively). A single candidate failed the Poster Presentation Project (compared to three in 2017-18). Conversely, there were significant increases in the number of candidates failing the Foundation: Basic Sciences written paper (15, compared to four in 2017-18) and Practical exam (seven, compared to one in 2017-18).
  - Four students failed both written papers (Oral Ecosystems and Foundation: Basic Sciences), of whom two were particularly weak and achieved marks of below 40% for both papers. Two students that were originally borderline fails for the Oral Ecosystems written paper had their marks moderated and increased such that the minimum pass mark (50%) was achieved.
  - Unlike in previous years, there was only a single ICA (Oral Ecosystems) that comprised eight short structured questions (five marks each). The Foundation: Basic Sciences ICA (two essays to be answered from a choice of three) was dropped as part of the assessment for the first time this year, with more emphasis being placed on the Extended Essay and Poster Presentation Project; there were increases in the levels of attainment for these latter two assessments compared to 2017-18, particularly for the Extended Essay which all candidates passed. In any case, these two assessments were relatively stronger in 2017-18 compared to other assessments, so this year saw an even stronger consolidation of previously observed high levels of attainment in these components.

Dropping of the Foundation: Basic Sciences ICA is in line with my general observation that students find essays challenging in the confines of an exam situation. In 2017-18, 22 candidates failed this assessment, the highest for any assessment by a considerable margin. However, as stated in previous years, it would be a shame for essays to be dropped completely as a form of assessment (which appears to be an increasing trend generally in some dental undergraduate degree courses), since essays do allow students to demonstrate critical thinking and understanding and serve as a worthwhile discriminator between the more and less academically capable students. However, the Extended Essay can continue to provide this utility.

- *In lieu* of the dropping of the Foundation: Basic Sciences ICA, the Extended Essay was given more emphasis, and all candidates achieved a pass mark (compared to 11 fails in 2017-18). Clearly the guidance given to students on how to write an

essay continued to be very good, and it was once again encouraging to note that no cases of plagiarism were reported.

- As ever, the two written papers (Foundation: Basic Sciences, Oral Ecosystems) covered a broad range of relevant topics. These papers comprised MSA questions, which were well structured – some questions had a more structured second part that particularly allowed demonstration of logical thought and clear understanding of scientific principles and biological processes. While the level of attainment for the Oral Ecosystems written paper increased (four failing candidates, compared to eight in 2017-18), there were significantly more failing candidates for the Foundation: Basic Sciences written paper (15, compared to just four in 2017-18). The reasons for this are unclear, and is likely merely to be due to year on year variation that can occur. One concern was the fact that in the Oral Ecosystems paper, part D of question 4 was generally not answered by candidates since this material was not taught and was not part of core knowledge. Consequently this question was marked out of 8 rather than 10 and part D disregarded. In future, it should be ensured that all material being examined has actually been taught as part of the course, and this can be further facilitated during the standard setting process.
- The Oral Ecosystems and Foundation Practical was conducted online for the second time this year and once again covered a wide range of topics. The number of failing candidates increased to seven (from just one in 2017-18).

Overall, student achievement is high and compares favourably with those of similar programmes elsewhere in the UK.

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

The programme aims and learning outcomes are highly appropriate and were successfully achieved by the wide variety of assessment methods used. Assessment procedures are robust and high-quality examination questions were used. I was once again pleased with the range, depth and appropriateness of the assessment methods used. The marks awarded were fair and a consistent level of marking was evident, with exception of two candidates in the Oral Ecosystems written paper; these were borderline failing candidates and their marks were increased to achieve the minimum pass mark of 50% for this component.

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

N/A.

**5. Year-on-Year Comments**

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

Overall, a high level of attainment was once again achieved, but with some notable variation in individual assessments compared to 2017-18 (see above comments).

**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)

N/A.

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

Assessment procedures are in line with those expected from 'good practice' and in keeping with institutional policies and procedures. I favour continued use of the Extended Essay to aid subject understanding, integration of facts and hypotheses and to demonstrate critical thinking and appraisal.

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

N/A.

## 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)
<b>Programme/Course information</b>				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	X		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			X
<b>Commenting on draft examination question papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	X		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	X		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	X		
<b>Examination scripts</b>				
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?	X		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	X		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	X		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	X		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	X		
<b>Coursework and practical assessments</b>				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	X		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	X		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	X		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	X		
<b>Clinical examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			X
<b>Sampling of work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	X		
<b>Examining board meeting</b>				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	X		

9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	X		
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?	X		
<b>Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			X
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			X
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			X

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

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