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Sent by email to a.dilley@bsms.ac.uk

15 December 2016

Dear Dr Dilley,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BDS(Hons) in Dentistry (Primary BDS Part 1 - Anatomy).

Your Report has been considered by the School 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

1. Opportunities for students to achieve full marks under existing marking criteria.
2. Standard setting of assessments.
3. Detailed observations on the nature of examination questions and project/poster elements of the assessment.

The following response has been provided on behalf of the Programme Team:

1. The Programme Team continually modifies the marking criteria to try to make it possible to reach the higher end and will look at the criteria again in light of your comments.

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2. As you highlight in your report the Programme Team will from next year be standard setting all examination papers including ICA's, end of year examinations and also the spotter examination. This is not a requirement of the GDC, but is being brought in for all dental examinations from the next academic year due to the shift from honours classification to the more traditional classification of dental schools which is pass, merit and distinction.
3. The Programme Team takes on board your comments about anatomy questions, aims to give a variety of question types to get a balance of assessment and will strive in future to get this balance right. The essay components of the assessments are more subjective than the short answer questions and the marking is based on set marking criteria, hence the reason that the Team are not too prescriptive with the allocation of marks. The Team provide an outline answer (containing core information) to External Examiners when papers are scrutinised rather than a model answer as the nature of extra reading and integration of material will determine the allocation of some of the marks particularly at the high end.

With respect to your comments and those of the other External Examiners, the Team has looked at the project assessments and agree that there is a danger of over-assessing students. For this reason the leaflet which you commend is being removed (but retaining the reflective research trail element of this) and, from next academic year, the programme will have the group and individual posters. Whilst the task is the same in both cases the first does assess different skills with respect to team working, and the second will test students' ability to reflect on their work (taken from the leaflet assessment). In terms of clarity with marking, the individual poster setter marks the posters using set marking criteria and the course leader moderates these. Peer assessment is also used for the group poster which you welcome. For clarity the Team will provide in future how this contributes to the final mark.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. excellent standard of teaching reflected in the performance of top students;
3. impressive range of assessments;
4. effective process for detecting and supporting failing students.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

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 the University website and will be available to all students and staff.

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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.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar