

EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report and are available at <http://learning.cf.ac.uk/quality/review/external-examiners/reports/>.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr. Dylan Gwynn-Jones		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Aberystwyth University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	Biological Sciences BSc in Biology / Ecology / Zoology		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015-2016	Date of Report:	16/06/16

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff.**

1. Programme Structure

Cardiff Biosciences offer a good range of interesting and academically challenging modules structured into well designed and academically sound degrees in Biology, Zoology and Ecology. These degrees provide very good range of skills and learning experience and respond to the benchmark statements for their respective subjects. Within these 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.

Based on a meeting with a group of representative students in February 2016, they appeared generally happy with the degree structures and content, the Department and the educational experience offered.

2. Academic Standards

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 was very impressed by some of the assignments completed offering a range of skills and challenges. Material is kept 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. For the modules inspected these marks were deserved and I was impressed by the synthesis present in the 1st class assignments.

I agree with comment by the previous examiner that the coursework for Conservation Biology BI3114 is challenging but very worthwhile. I am also sympathetic with staff that this module must involve a significant workload. I was also very impressed by some of the review assessment for module BI3136 Global Climate Change Ecology.

3. The Assessment Process

The processes in place were generally easy to follow and well organised although some material was not easy to access. There was very clear evidence of annotations, feedback on the scripts / reports inspected but the final overall comment on some scripts could be more differentiating. However, marks matched well with work presented and I am overall satisfied with the processes in place.

There was evidence of moderation present but this was the more difficult to find. I also looked at the volume of work and felt that for certain modules the workload could be reduced or coursework could be weighted more relative to the exam. This would also help student performance as coursework marks were often higher than exams.

One area that I wanted to focus in this first year of appointment was feedback. This is in response to NSS 2015.

When inspecting work I was overall satisfied with the level of feedback given. Annotations were generally clear and correct and this helped the reader/student understand and establish why a particular mark had been awarded. As you would expect the number of comments was lower when the work was of a higher standard. Maybe more positive comments could be included in places to highlight good practice –this was evident in many modules but not all. Also at times the main comment should be presented in a more focussed way summarising key points that the student could use to improve future work e.g. “In the future please...”.

One significant concern that I wish to raise here was with the disappointing number of students that actually looked at their feedback. For some modules inspected only 30% of students made the effort to access feedback. I question how some students can effectively respond to NSS about the level of feedback provided. Most importantly, feedback is provided for the students to improve future performance and they should try to benefit from the effort made by staff here. I encourage dialogue between staff-student groups and central monitoring of student engagement with feedback.

A further area where there was unanimous concern raised by the examiners was the University practice of sequentially rounding of marks – this was discussed in the exam board and correspondence has been sent to the University registry on this issue.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Although this was my first year as examiner I did inspect reports from examiners in previous years. This was in order to maintain continuity. Some key points include:

- Student numbers continue to be high on some popular modules in year 3 although the work presented is of a similar standard to smaller modules. Large class numbers can impact on student experience and likely impose strain on the staff involved.
- Some scripts assignments / exam papers scored >80% and this was deserved in each case. Staff are considering the upper marking range where appropriate.
- There is now evidence that students are referencing more thoroughly and in the correct format.

5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)

The preparation for this role and induction has been very good. This began with a Central University induction day, meeting relevant staff at Cardiff Biosciences in January 2016 and meeting student in February 2016. Information transfer has been good and the use of electronic systems has eased this whole process. The Deputy School Manager has done an excellent job to ensure that we had access to module and assessment information as required. However, the module packs could be better organised by staff to include paper copies of module evaluation and assessment briefs.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

- a. Consistent, clear and thorough annotations on the majority of coursework inspected.
- b. Clear marking criteria.
- c. Feedback that explains clearly why a particular mark had been awarded. This needs to be taken further (see above) with a focus on how this can be used for future assessments.
- d. Evidence of staff research backgrounds having a positive influence on teaching via examples used and standard of work expected.
- e. Excellent and challenging coursework for Conservation Biology BI3114
- f. 'Real life' insight and professional critical training in the coursework for BI3110 Assessing the Environment

7. Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (External Examiners for postgraduate Master's Programmes only, see also 9.23-9.29 below)

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 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?	X		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		X	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
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		
Marking 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?	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		
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
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		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			X
Sampling of Work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	X		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
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		
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?			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
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
9.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			X
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			X
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			X
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			X
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			X
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			X
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			X

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

ExternalExaminers@cf.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

SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a postgraduate taught Master's Programme, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure), should be seen collectively by the External Examiners.