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Sent by email to [emma.raven@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:emma.raven@leicester.ac.uk)

30 November 2016

Dear Professor Raven,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MSc in Biological Chemistry.

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. Slight variations in the amount of coursework between modules and suggestion that greater consistency would be helpful for students.
2. Viability of the Programme given the limited number of students.
3. Reports from students that module leaders "were not always immediately aware that the MSc students were part of the module".
4. low marks obtained by the Chemical Biology students on module CHT228, and suggestion that "these students would benefit from access to the tutorials and workshops for this course"
5. In the light of the poor performance of students re-sitting CHT214, the suggestion that in future resit "papers are sensibly structured to allow weaker students a chance to gain at least a few marks."
6. Organisational problems in providing External Examiners with materials in a timely manner.

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**The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:**

1. The School agrees with this general principle and indeed most of the core modules for the programme have the same assessment regime (70% examination, 30% coursework). Apart from the key skills, practical and colloquium modules (which are 100% coursework), the exceptions (e.g. CHT229) are modules in which it was felt that more of the learning outcomes could only be assessed in a formal examination. The School will however keep this under review. Module information, including details of the assessment, is available via SIMS and from 2015/16 has not been reproduced in the Course Handbook.
2. This is something that the School keeps under constant review. The programme attracts a significant number of applications, particularly from overseas, and 77 offers were made for admission in September 2016, 32 of which were firmly accepted. Only 4 students have in fact enrolled, however. Many of the modules taken by Biological Chemistry students are shared with other programmes, but nevertheless the School agrees that enrolment at this level is not sustainable in the long term.
3. This relates to modules where lectures are shared between MChem and MSc programmes, and should not have happened, as all module leaders were informed at the start of the academic year of the two different groups of students. In 2016/17 the School will make sure this message is passed on to all academic staff involved in the delivery of such modules.
4. This module is identical to the final year MChem module CH3404 in all respects except the pass mark. MChem and MSc students therefore attend the workshops ("class tutorials") together and complete the same assignments. The module CHT232 (Key Skills for Postgraduate Chemists) is used in part to provide MSc students with required background knowledge that may have been missing from their undergraduate degree. The School notes that CHT228 is an optional module, but will look to see if changes need to be made to the content of CHT232, and/or to the enrolment advice given by Personal Tutors, in order that students are better prepared for it.
5. The School is happy to implement this suggestion.
6. The School apologises for the organisational problems that occurred in 2015/16. Some changes have been made for 2016/17, and it is anticipated that the process will run more smoothly this year.

**The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:**

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process

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2. student perceptions of “a challenging and interesting course”;
3. commendation of enhanced processes for the marking of project reports.

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.

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