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Sent by email to r.payne@bristol.ac.uk

15 April 2020

Dear Dr Payne,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2018/19

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for MSc/PgDip/PgCert in Therapeutics.

Your report has been considered by colleagues in the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.
2. The Problem-based learning approach and keeping the programme highly relevant to practice is encouraging and should be continued.

Issues highlighted in your report and response provided by the School:

1. ***Year-on-Year Comments: Rates of distinction were high raising concern that questions could be more challenging and more discriminatory.***

We most definitely acknowledge the fact that there are a high number of distinction grades and we believe that much of this reflects the fact that we attract a self-selected group of high-achieving students, with a particular interest in prescribing, medicines safety and therapeutics. To a large extent, we expect them to achieve high marks, although this is by no means a given.



We are confident that our assessments are able to discriminate better students from those who are less good, as kindly acknowledged in your comments. In relation to the variation in the questions asked – some are more guideline based and some allow for more freedom of expression – we have asked for comments from several other, similar courses in Postgraduate Taught, who all take this approach to allow students the opportunity to express themselves in different ways, examining different skills.

In response to past comments on the number of Distinctions, we have provided further guidance to our markers on the application of the standard Cardiff University marking rubric, which we must use, to the assignments and re-iterate this (as well as making markers aware of any other changes) each year. When applying the rubric, markers are encouraged by the University to use the whole spectrum of marks from 0-100%, but the designation of 50% as a pass, 60% as a merit and 70% as a distinction has not changed in line with this, which is problematic. We feel that this particular problem is in an institutional or wider higher education issue, rather than with the programme itself.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and 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's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar