

Academic & Student Support Services
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Simon Wright LLB



Sent by email to d.rose@soton.ac.uk

29 July 2015

Dear Dr Rose,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MB BCH (Medicine Phase 1, Yrs 1 & 2).

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.

Issue(s) Highlighted:

1. Consideration of reviewing the learning outcomes to help guide students with their depth of learning and revision;
2. Providing the External Examiner with Programme specs and an overview/ summary earlier in the year;
3. Providing the External Examiner with the Progress test as this was included in the summative assessment;
4. Providing the External Examiner with a timetable for the year to include exams times, when papers for review were to be sent and comments submitted and exam boards;
5. Providing the External Examiner with a contact list/ central point of contact to avoid any potential confusion;
6. ISCEs - A note on the examiner form to ask examiner to write a comment for any fail mark awarded;
7. The usefulness of feedback comments from simulated patients;
8. Professional Behaviour – the notable difference in the amount of feedback / comments provided in the interim and Final tutor reports and the team assessment of behaviour did not result in any 'disagree' scores;
9. Case Based Learning Groups – consideration of how you will sustain the level of input, engagement and assessment of tutors.

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

1. Following the completion of a full cycle of Phase 1 in C21 the Case Based Learning Lead is currently in the process of reviewing all learning outcomes for case based learning to accurately map 'Specific' and 'High' Level Learning Outcomes that have been delivered in the first two years of the new curriculum. These will then be

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compared to the learning outcomes in the original validation documents to identify any curriculum drift and any potential 'gaps' in expected learning. This will then help to inform the phase 2 team about the material delivered in the first two years of the programme.

2. The Year Directors will arrange for the Programme Specs for Phase 1 to be forwarded to all external examiners.
3. In conjunction with the Assessment team the Year 2 Director will arrange for a copy of Progress Test 3 (Summative) to be sent to the Phase 1 External Examiners once it has been signed off for printing by the Assessments Sub-Dean.
4. The Year Directors will forward a timetable for assessments once they are finalised for the 2015/16 academic year.
5. In future Year Directors will act as the point of contact for external examiners. In the event of a year Director being unavailable, the Phase 1 Administrative Lead will deputise.
6. This is covered in the briefing to examiners. The lead for ISCEs will incorporate a comment on the marking sheet to ensure comments are always made about any fail mark awarded.
7. If at all feasible, the team tries to recruit 'real patients' for ISCEs. Simulated patients are used in some stations. The actors have been trained to give feedback. The comments are only used formatively so the team is happy this will not affect student progression and will only serve to enhance feedback.
8. The Case Based Learning Lead has now generated documentation outlining the Standard Operating Procedure for producing Facilitator reports as well as a detailed job description for Facilitators. This will be disseminated at the training event booked for Facilitators in September 2015. The point about team assessment of behaviour is an important one and has been the subject of much discussion with the Case Based Learning Lead. The aim is to train year 1 students and Facilitators that the starting point for feedback is a 'neutral baseline' (i.e. a score of 3 on a scale of 1-5) and students will provide feedback inferring there is either a 'need for improvement' (score of 1-2), or that there has been 'significant improvement' (score of 4-5). This is work in progress.
9. This has been a challenging aspect of this new curriculum but fortunately we currently have enough Facilitators to manage the phase 1 curriculum. The Facilitator population is very diverse and the team are always looking to recruit interested parties from the Clinical and Academic Communities. The concern with recruiting Junior Doctors is the sustainability as these posts are short term and often end up with a geographic relocation after 1 year. However, the team is now looking to try and have facilitators who manage student groups in pairs so we have capacity to deal with absences due to illness, clashes with clinics, conference attendance etc., opening up opportunities for engagement of more staff including junior doctors.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. How students commented positively on the course preparing them for Phase 1b;
3. Your observations that Phase 1 seems a well thought, coherent and contemporary which relates clearly its learning outcomes to Tomorrows Doctors and you would expect it to provide a strong basis for students progressing into the later years of the Programme.
4. Your commendation of the development and delivery of the ISCEs examinations

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I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your continued support of the programme and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

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 Student Intranet 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