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Sent by email to s.j.parr@soton.ac.uk

16 December 2016

Dear Dr Parr,

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 in Dentistry (Primary).

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. Observations on the marking of essay-based assessments and the ability of students to achieve top marks under current marking criteria.
2. Encouragement for the standard setting of assessments.

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

1. Marking of the essay components of the assessments is based on set marking criteria, hence the reason the Team is not too prescriptive with the allocation of marks. Outline answers (containing core information) are provided 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.

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The 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.

2. From next year the Team will be standard setting all examination papers, including ICA's, end of year examinations and 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 honour classification to the more traditional classification of dental schools which is pass, merit and distinction. This will allow the Team in future to increase the variety of questions even further and test the application of knowledge. With the purchase of LiftUp software the Team will in future align questions to GDC outcomes and develop the ability to mix and match questions which are standard set. The software will also benefit students particularly for ICA feedback as it will give them a greater understanding of their performance relative to the cohort. Whilst the Team currently does this in a feedback session, not all students participate.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. plans to use new software enabling even closer mapping of assessments to GDC requirements;
3. responsiveness of the Programme Team to your observations on the Programme;
4. historic statistical data available to examiners to highlight mark trends;
5. early identification of "students of concern".

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

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service 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 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,



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