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**Sent by email to [m.a.warren@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:m.a.warren@sheffield.ac.uk)**

**27 February 2017**

Dear Professor Warren,

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

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BSc in Biomedical Sciences and the BSc in Biomedical Sciences (Intercalated) (Anatomy).

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. Learning Central easy to use and helpful when viewing projects as well as some other work, but it could be streamlined with a more consistent format.
2. Your suggestion that "some of the detailed business would be better done in pre-meetings with the final Examination Board being focussed on final outcomes".

**The following response has been provided in consultation with the School:**

1. The School agrees, and will be implementing this once we have the results of the University's current development of guidelines for consistency of format on Learning Central. One of the School's modules is being used as an exemplar of good practice by the University. The School would like to receive the University's guidelines, however, before implementing its own to avoid duplicating effort.

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2. The School has indicated that most of the detailed business is done at subject exam boards before the arrival of the external examiners. Some detailed business is dealt with at the final composite exam boards and the School suspects that you are referring to extenuating circumstances, where the final exam board is the first time that the totality of a student's performance is available for consideration.

### **Additional comments / observations**

Your comment on late work receiving a mark of zero has been noted. Senate Regulations provide that where Coursework Assessments are submitted late, and where there are no Extenuating Circumstances, a mark of zero shall be awarded for those Assessments. This University rule has been in place for many years after a University-wide consultation conducted in the *Assessment Matters* project in 2013-2014. The School has confirmed that exceptions are made for students with extenuating circumstances.

You also commented on the lack of "early access to a comprehensive spread sheet of marks from all components for each student". A suite of reports is available for Schools to use to meet the requirements of their Examining Boards. It is intended that they provide a broadly consistent approach across all Schools and limit the potential for error caused by separate School-produced reports. The content of the SIMS reports formed part of the University's *Assessment Matters* project in 2013-2014 and all Schools were consulted on the nature of the reports. Where Schools identify additional data requirements particular to their needs it is open for them to draw the matter for consideration by the University Assessment Working Group.

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

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. support for planned changes to the structure of the School's undergraduate programmes and introduction of Integrated Master's programmes;
3. extensive Professional Training Year opportunities that responds to the needs of both employers and graduates.

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.

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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