



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Emma Raven		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Leicester		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MSc Chemical Biology		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015/2016	Date of Report:	21/9/16

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

### 1. Programme Structure

This is my final year as external examiner. The MSc course is very well structured – it deals with topical and relevant aspects of chemical biology and to a very high standard. I am impressed with the coverage of the lecture material and the general delivery of the course. It is a challenging and very interesting course for the students, and that is reflected in the feedback we heard from students on this course.

### 2. Academic Standards

The standards are in the right place for a course at this level.

The exam papers were sensibly structured in terms of difficulty and coverage, with a suitable degree of challenge to test more able students. Modules vary slightly in the amount of course work involved (and the relative weightings for the final grades) and some consistency across modules for course work within a single course, and making sure that these agree to those published in module handbooks, would be helpful for students.

This year saw a drop in the quality of the students on the course. Several failed to complete the course and only two graduated. A question for the department would be the viability of such a course for limited numbers of students.

We talked to students and they reported no serious issues above and beyond the perennial gripes (which I have heard in every university where I have examined) regarding the timetables and clashes of coursework deadlines. One minor issue

which they did raise was that course convenors were not always immediately aware that the MSc students were part of “their” module: some attention to this would help the students to feel more “included”.

### **3. The Assessment Process**

The marking is precisely annotated, giving full explanations for marking allocations. Marking schemes are clear and properly adhered to. The marking of the project reports (always the most difficult to mark reliably) has been tightened up in recent years with the introduction of more structured marking schemes for different aspects of the project. I found the marking of the projects to be well done.

I checked numerous scripts and project reports and could find no errors in the marking and assessments.

There was an issue this year with the CHT228 paper, which had a low module average for the cohort of MSc chemical biology students. They clearly find the module very testing, perhaps having not been as well initiated to the course as other u/g students on the course who may have attended other synthetic/organic modules in years 1-3. These students would benefit from access to the tutorials and workshops for this course.

There was also an issue with the CH214 paper at resit level, which had very poor results. Perhaps the department could make sure in future years that papers are sensibly structured to allow weaker students a chance to gain at least a few marks.

### **4. Year-on-Year Comments**

Overall, I am happy with the academic content of the course and its delivery.

As far as the Department is concerned, this year I observed that the process of collating all marks, correctly and on time, is hugely demanding and puts pressure on the module convenors at a very busy time of year. I had not noticed this in my previous two years of examining this same course, and I take it to be a consequence of increased workloads for all staff in the School of Chemistry arising from increased students numbers. I mention this, not as a criticism of the course or the process, nor because I think that it affects the quality of the provision delivered to students (which it did not, this year), but because of the potential for this to affect the examination process in the future if a bad error/delay ever creeps in and is not caught in time. There is the additional issue, raised above, about the efficiencies of teaching small numbers of students on masters courses, rather than focussing on the core business of teaching undergraduates.

In terms of the examination board itself and the interactions with the externals, I did notice this year that there were glitches (for example slipping of the timetable for delivery of exam papers to me, plus some marks arriving only just in the nick of time), and I think some tightening up of the process in terms of preparation before the externals arrive would make the process much more fluent and would better reflect the obvious effort that the Department makes for this cohort of students.

### **5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)**

N/a.

## **6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement**

None identified.

## **7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)**

I addressed that above in section 4.

## 8. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Programme/Course Information</b>				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		n	
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	y		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	y		
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	y		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	y		
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?			I was not asked to look at that
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	y		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	y		
8.19	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular, to the work of the Examining Board. Have you had adequate opportunities to discuss the Programme and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	y		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

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Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University,  
McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE