



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Adrian Williams		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Reading		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MPharm; Pharmaceutics		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2012-13	Date of Report:	17-06-2013

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 was my fourth year as external for the MPharm in Cardiff's School of Pharmacy, having been asked to serve for an additional year. The MPharm programme is accredited by our professional body and is entirely appropriate both in terms of academic structure and fitness to the GPhC standards.

The Cardiff programme is very well structured, building appropriately in terms of rigour and learning outcomes as students progress from years 1 through to 4 and it is clear that students meet the learning outcomes, further evidenced by their success in the pre-registration examination. The programme integrates the science and practice of pharmacy, especially in year 4 although the new educational standards from the GPhC may require further revision to the course structure (and in light of the impending 5-year MPharm programme in England).

### 2. Academic Standards

From my experience as external examiner at other leading UK Schools of Pharmacy, I view the Cardiff MPharm as amongst the most rigorous programmes delivered. Judged by the quality of exam papers, research projects and vivas, the students meet the demands of the course as further evidenced by the number of first and upper second class degrees awarded.

Last year I commented on the different attainment by students from Taylors and those at Cardiff; the Taylors students were in their second year and so joined Cardiff

for this exam session. I was very pleased to see that the students had integrated well into Cardiff, and that there was no unexpected disparity in attainment through the third year marks with Taylors students distributed throughout the class average marks.

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

I was provided with the examination papers in good time to provide comments and these were attended to in a timely manner before the student sat the exams and the level of the papers was entirely appropriate.

During the examiner meetings I was again provided with all the necessary documents – exemplar papers from both Cardiff and, where appropriate, from Taylors, project reports, coursework and bundles for borderline viva cases. Again, I must compliment the department on providing a “host” to liaise with before and during the examiners duties; the host was most helpful and supportive and helped to ensure that I could fulfil my duties in a timely manner. I believe that this is an example of excellent practice that (if not already) merits rolling out throughout Cardiff.

I reviewed papers covering all aspects of “drug delivery”;

PH4208 - Research projects. There was an impressive variety in the project topics that students had delivered with a good deal of ambition. Mark schemes were appropriately used and variation between first and second year markers was less than in previous years, probably reflecting the adherence to a clearer mark scheme. I was pleased to see that a comment from last year, that the extended essay be excluded from the final year project introduction had been done.

PH4112 - Paper appraisal and research essay. I have commented previously that I feel that the appraisal exercise is highly valuable for the students and again this was done well, developing critical skills and was a good discriminator between students' abilities. The extended essay was also of a generally high standard and laid firm foundations for the projects. Again, consistency between markers was improved from previous years.

PH 3112 - Design, formulation and QA. This paper had a relatively high failure rate (14 fails) but the examination was fair, clear and was marked according to the mark schemes. The average for the module was ~55%, lower than other third year modules but not excessively low or a matter of concern.

PH 2204 / PH 7204 – Pharmaceutical biotechnology. The average for this course of 55.4% was the lowest for the second year modules but again the paper was fair and appropriately marked. I looked specifically for any discrepancies between Taylors and Cardiff scripts but found none.

PH 2107 / PH 7107 – Formulation Science. Again an appropriate module assessment which averaged 55.9%. The Cardiff exemplars showed appropriate marking and adherence to the mark scheme. The very short timescale between sitting and exam board meant that the Taylors papers could not be moderated though exemplars were provided.

PH 2203 / PH7203 – Drug disposition. A good spread of marks and again another very good paper. Of the three sections on the paper, section C was an essay. Here, the Cardiff module leader had moderated ALL the answers from Taylors and I was pleased to see that this had been done so comprehensively to ensure parity in marking. Whilst appreciating that this took considerable time and effort from Cardiff staff, the original marks from Taylors for section C were significantly different to the moderated marks. For example, marks were moderated down (marked out of 25) in some exemplars from 23 to 13, 17 to 10, 11 to 5, 9 to 2 and 22 to 11 (essentially taking a score of 88% (i.e. a very good first class answer) to 44% (i.e. a third class answer). I had helpful discussions with the module leader regarding the need for such moderation and understand that the original marker was new to post. I also felt that the model answer was less well defined than in other second year modules and inherently, an essay based answer is more open to marking differences than, for example, a calculation. Since all the answers were moderated by Cardiff then I have no doubt regarding the appropriateness of the final marks.

Whilst there is clearly a need for discursive exam answers, it may be that more structured essays would help to reduce mark variations between the two groups, perhaps with further mentoring for academics in Taylors and more structured mark schemes.

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

Again I enjoyed the (final) vivas with borderline students. That the students were truly at borderlines was evident, showing that the degree classifications were correct.

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

N/A

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

As described above, the time and effort spent by one module leader on moderating the Taylors marks was noteworthy.

Also commendable was the scope and ambition of the final year research projects that I reviewed; these were of a very high standard.

I would also note the support from the “host” during the vivas; the host recorded the student’s answers for later reflection and acted with full integrity by not contributing to vivas where the student had undertaken a project led by him.

#### **Enhancement:**

I have two suggestions beyond the comments regarding Taylors moderation.

1. Annotation of scripts. Generally scripts were annotated to show where marks had been awarded but this was not consistent and there were several questions where the marker made no notes on the paper but simply gave a mark. In these cases it is very difficult for the examiner to see whether the mark scheme has been applied appropriately and fairly. In my own institution,

each marker has to provide a short justification for the marks on essays / extended answers, even if only stating points missed in the answer.

- I was surprised to hear at the examination board that some students had not had their identities verified by the invigilators at the sitting of the examination; again this is not permitted at my own institution.

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

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as external at Cardiff. Staff have been invariably helpful, considerate and have directed me to any issues that may have arisen (which they rarely have) rather than waiting for me to find them myself. The host system works very well, papers have always been sent to me in good time and I have always been provided with the scripts needed to make my academic judgements at examiner's meetings.

The MPharm at Cardiff is an excellent programme with high standards and high levels of student achievement; I wish the school well in the future.

### 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/A
<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	Note comment on Taylors	
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?		Not always	
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		

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<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?	Y		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
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?			N/A
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

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[ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk](mailto:ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk)

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