

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S ANNUAL REPORT  
ON POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY  
2019-20

Name of external examiner	Dr Fady Mohareb – Reader in Bioinformatics
Institution	Cranfield University
Programme(s) being examined (e.g. MA Drama)	MSc in Bioinformatics
Examination board(s) attended (e.g. PG Drama SEB, 19/10/18)	Bioinformatics MSc SEB

Your completed report should be submitted by e-mail to Alice de Havillan, Academic Quality and Standards Officer, at [a.l.dehavillan@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:a.l.dehavillan@qmul.ac.uk) within 30 days of the main examination board meeting.

If you prefer, you may post your report in hard copy. If completing this by hand, you may need to enlarge the text boxes before printing. Please send any hard copy reports to:

Academic Secretariat (External Examiners)  
ARCS, Queens E10  
Queen Mary University of London  
Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS

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Your report is intended for internal use only and will contribute towards aspects of Queen Mary's annual reporting procedures. Your report will be read widely, and will be made available to students; **please do not include personal information (such as your home address) or identify individual students.**

If you would like to raise any issues of a sensitive nature directly with the Principal, please feel free to do so. The address is Principal, Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS. Please do NOT use this form for this purpose.

This template is updated annually; the most recent version is available at:  
<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality-assurance/external-examiners/external-examiners-resources/>

## 1. Programme structure

*Please comment upon:*

- *any particular strengths and weaknesses of the programme;*
- *the balance and content of the degree programme(s) followed by students;*
- *the coherence of programmes, and the appropriateness of the core/compulsory modules in relation to the aims and intended learning outcomes;*
- *the suitability of methods and the adequacy of teaching as reflected by the standards achieved by the candidates.*

I was able to review exam questions, scripts, coursework and feedback provided to students and once again, I am satisfied with the quality of the course. The course covers in great depth the required computational and biological skills needed to manage, analyse, and visualize molecular biology data. The balance between the biological and computational topics covered is well suited for this M-level degree. I can see regular updates and innovative teaching ways being implemented compared to last year, which is of paramount importance for a field as dynamic as bioinformatics. The teaching team seems to have quickly adapted to the unprecedented pandemic situation in terms of moving the remaining student supervision and viva online, and they have already adapted some novel approaches for cloud-based learning in preparation for the coming academic year.

## 2. Curriculum design

*One aspect of the Queen Mary strategy is a specific objective on 'ensuring a high quality learning experience for all students through the design of the curriculum and its assessments'. For this objective, one of the measurements is through the external examiners' comments and there is a target related to your grading. Please will you indicate below how well you believe the programme curriculum and assessments are designed.*

**GOOD**

## 3. Standard of student performance

- 3.1 *In your view, are the standards of student performance comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK higher education institutions with which you are familiar?*

**YES**

- 3.2 *Are there any other points on student performance that you wish to raise?*

## 3. Assessment Process

- 4.1 *In your view, are the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted?*

YES

4.2 Please also comment for Queen Mary on:

- *strengths and weaknesses in the assessment process;*
- *the appropriateness of the assessment methods (i.e. examinations, essays, dissertations etc.) to the learning outcomes for the programme, and the balance between them;*
- *the marking scheme, and the scheme for the award of honours (including weighting in final assessment between years of the programme and in relation to the number of modules completed);*
- *the quality and achievements of the candidates.*

I was able to review exam questions, scripts, coursework and feedback provided to students and once again, I am happy with the overall quality of the course. I was also able to attend most of the talks of the first and second day of the student presentations via MS Teams. I was happy to see the increased number of students within this year's cohort, while maintaining the same, if not even better quality of training provided for the bioinformatics cohort. I was very impressed with the quality of the work and the diversity of topics covered by these presentations. I should also commend the markers for their interaction during Q&A sessions despite the time limitation.

## 5. Other Issues of Quality

*Please delete as appropriate. If the answer is 'no' for any of these questions, please give details in the comment box at the end of section 5.*

Examination Papers		
5.1	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for consulting you on the structure and content of the examination paper(s)?	Yes
5.2	Were your comments on the examination paper(s) properly taken into account?	Yes
Marking and Moderation		
5.3	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for your moderation of assignments?	Yes
5.4	Did you have sufficient information on the marking scheme(s)?	Yes
5.5	Did you feel that you could fairly assess the quality and consistency of the marking?	Yes
5.6	Was the quality of the marking satisfactory?	Yes
5.7	Were you satisfied that all scripts were double-marked internally (where required)?	Yes
5.8	Were you satisfied with the arrangements to review any practical work?	Yes
5.9	Were you happy with the arrangements for conducting oral examinations/ presentations (where used as part of the assessment for a module)?	Yes

Examination Board		
5.10	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for, and conduct of, the examination board meeting?	Yes
5.11	Were you satisfied with the decisions and recommendations of the examination board meeting?	Yes
Assessment		
5.12	Was the standard of assessment consistent with that of the national university system, so far as you could tell?	Yes
5.13	Were you satisfied with the assessment arrangements for associate students (if applicable)?	Yes
<i>Please detail below any concerns regarding 5.1 – 5.13.</i>		

## 6. Issues of Procedure

*If applicable, how did procedures/arrangements compare this year with previous years? Were suggestions that you made last year acted upon? (if not applicable, please go to question 7).*

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## 7. General Comments

7.1 *In your view, are the standards set for the awards appropriate for qualifications at this level in this subject?*

**YES**

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7.2 *Are there any other points that you wish to raise? In particular, Queen Mary would welcome your comments on any aspects of exemplary practice in the subject area for which you act as external examiner.*

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7.3 *If appropriate, please provide a short statement or bullet points of any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes.*

Following discussion with the Programme Director, I was glad to hear that the course is continuing to be popular and that the student numbers are still looking good for 2020-2021 despite the Covid-19's impact on other aspects of the business.

I was also been made aware that the most of the teaching is moving online on AWS R-Studio Cloud and other cloud-based solution, which I think is a fantastic idea. I fully support this move and I truly believe that the timing for such a strategic decision could not have been better. I would even recommend assessing the possibility to expand this approach across other courses depending on how well things go for Bioinformatics through the coming academic year.

In conclusion, once again, I am very happy with the quality of the course and the standards of the

procedures with regards to quality assurance. I am also attaching a detailed review about the taught components covered in detail for your reference.

Finally, I wish the course team the very best for 2020-21.

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', written in a cursive style.

**Date: 16.10.2020**

Thank you for completing this report and for your contribution to assuring standards and quality at Queen Mary University of London. Please return your report to the address/e-mail address given on the front page of this pro-forma. You will receive acknowledgement of the receipt of your report from the Academic Secretariat.