

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

Name of external examiner	Prof Jo Cable
Institution	School of Biosciences, Cardiff University
Programme(s) being examined (e.g. MA Drama)	MSc EEB, EEG and FAME
Examination board(s) attended (e.g. PG Drama SEB, 19/10/18)	2 nd Oct 2020 Exam Board (via TEAMS) following attendance at student oral presentations 23 June 2020 (via TEAMS) for MSc dissertation projects

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 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

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.

- Commented previously on the excellent diversity of taught and research components, standard of learning outcomes etc. for all three degree schemes so will not repeat again here.
- Delighted again to see a wider range of innovative research projects.
- It was great to witness the 'Oral presentation atmosphere' indicative of a coherent, integrated staff and student research community, which is clearly a great strength of the QM Masters.
- Stellar feedback provided to the students on most of the work submitted for review by the external examiners.

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 / NO (if 'no', please state the reasons they fall short)

Yes

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

It was very nice to attend the oral presentations in June and even though this was remote it was clear that the students were very enthusiastic about their work. During the June presentations, I had my first opportunity, since taking on the role of external examiner at QM, to talk to the students one-one about their experiences of the year. Perhaps because this was remote and scheduled over lunch time, no

students engaged with this process, which hopefully reflects their overall satisfaction with their degrees, but a course can never be fully evaluated without this direct feedback.
The quality of the student talks was high and the event was extremely well chaired.

3. Assessment Process

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

YES / NO (if 'no', please state the reasons they fall short)

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.*

Strengths

- Research-led small group teaching with innovative research projects
- Adaptability and commitment of the entire teaching staff
- Enthusiasm of the student body

Potential weaknesses

- While useful to have a generic marking scheme that runs across all modules, this perhaps could be a little more detailed and even tailored to different assessments. Particularly for the dissertation projects it would be useful to see how marks are awarded to each section (introduction, methods, results etc). This would also make it easier to cross check the marking. In contrast, for BIO781P a very clear (detailed) marksheet was provided to each student.
- Might be worth considering scope for a slightly wider portfolio of assessments, for instance a media report or stakeholder report.

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)?	NA
5.2	Were your comments on the examination paper(s) properly taken into account?	NA

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 for the most part
5.7	Were you satisfied that all scripts were double-marked internally (where required)?	Unclear which were double marked, other than the projects
5.8	Were you satisfied with the arrangements to review any practical work?	NA
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)?	NA
<i>Please detail below any concerns regarding 5.1 – 5.13.</i>		
5.6 Marking of the presentation of the projects (15% of the total module) no indication of the marking scheme for this assessment, and I felt some of the marks were inflated.		

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).

Yes – clarity on procedures and changed assessment for the field course – thank you!

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 / NO (if 'no', please state the reasons they fall short)

Yes

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.*

Commend staff for clearly adapting the degree experience so successfully in the face of COVID – most of the research projects had to be changed from practical to remote projects, but there was no evidence that this lessened the learning experience for the students or their enjoyment of their degrees.

Interesting to learn at the exam board about the COVID “Safety Net” policy, which appeared to be very fairly executed.

BIO781P Great idea to provide students with previous year’s class feedback.

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.*

N/A

Signed:



Date: 2 Oct 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.