

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

Name of external examiner	Dr Paz Vaqueiro
Institution	University of Reading
Programme(s) being examined (e.g. MA Drama)	MSc Chemical Research
Examination board(s) attended (e.g. PG Drama SEB, 19/10/18)	MSc Chemical Research Final Examination Board, 9/9/20

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.*

The programme structure is ideally suited for the aims of this MSc degree which, according to the Programme Specifications, seeks to prepare students for a research degree or for research in industry in their chosen field of chemistry. The compulsory component is an extended research project, and the two elective taught modules are an effective mechanism to provide students with taught background to their research project.

Academic staff at Queen Mary, and in particular the supervisors of the extended research projects, should be congratulated for the high quality of the teaching and training they provide, given the high standards achieved by a number of candidates in this Programme.

## 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)*

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

This was a small cohort, but there were outstanding performances, indicative of an excellent level of teaching and research training.

## 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)

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.*

The assessment process for the extended research project contains a good balance of different elements (written dissertation, oral exam, seminar, practical performance) which map well to the learning outcomes for the Programme. For instance, the practical performance assessment evaluates A5 (use a wide range of laboratory and analytical equipment), B3 (conduct advanced practical work efficiently and with due regard for safety), C2 (Manage time, prioritise workloads) and C3 (Ability to work independently), while the written dissertation assesses the ability to locate information (C5), to produce a scientific written report (B2), to interpret (A3) and analyse data (A4) and so on. The marking scheme for the extended research project is very detailed, clear and well-laid out, ensuring that students are assessed fairly. The assessment method (examination) for the two optional modules is in line with those for undergraduate modules, and it is entirely appropriate.

As this is a one-year programme, there is no weighing between different years. Given that the research project is 150 credits, the largest weighting for the award of a pass with Merit or with Distinction is the research project (dissertation and oral examination), in line with similar degrees at other universities.

## 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)?	<b><u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del> / <del>NA</del></b>
5.2	Were your comments on the examination paper(s) properly taken into account?	<b><u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del> / <del>NA</del></b>
Marking and Moderation		
5.3	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for your moderation of assignments?	<b><u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del></b>
5.4	Did you have sufficient information on the marking scheme(s)?	<b><u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del></b>
5.5	Did you feel that you could fairly assess the quality and consistency of the marking?	<b><u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del></b>
5.6	Was the quality of the marking satisfactory?	<b><u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del></b>

5.7	Were you satisfied that all scripts were double-marked internally (where required)?	<u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del> / <del>NA</del>
5.8	Were you satisfied with the arrangements to review any practical work?	<u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del> / <del>NA</del>
5.9	Were you happy with the arrangements for conducting oral examinations/ presentations (where used as part of the assessment for a module)?	<u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del> / <del>NA</del>
<b>Examination Board</b>		
5.10	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for, and conduct of, the examination board meeting?	<u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del>
5.11	Were you satisfied with the decisions and recommendations of the examination board meeting?	<u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del>
<b>Assessment</b>		
5.12	Was the standard of assessment consistent with that of the national university system, so far as you could tell?	<u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del>
5.13	Were you satisfied with the assessment arrangements for associate students (if applicable)?	<u>Yes</u> / <del>No</del> / <u>NA</u>
Please detail below any concerns regarding 5.1 – 5.13.		

## 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).*

This is not applicable to me, as this is my first year as external examiner.

## 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)

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.*

The detailed marking guidelines for the assessment of the dissertation were excellent and double marking helped ensure consistency of marks between candidates.  
The academic staff at Queen Mary should be commended for adapting, quickly and in a very efficient manner, the assessment process and the extended research project itself, to cope with the challenging situation created by Covid-19. There was also a good level of communication and

consultation with the external examiners about the changes made to the assessment procedures.

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: 17/9/20

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.