

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S ANNUAL REPORT  
ON POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY  
2020-21**

<b>Name of external examiner</b>	<b>Dr Fady Mohareb</b>
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Cranfield University</b>
<b>Programme(s) being examined (e.g. MA Drama)</b>	<b>MSc in Bioinformatics</b>
<b>Examination board(s) attended (e.g. PG Drama SEB, 19/10/21)</b>	<b>PG Biology SEB</b>

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 course offers a very good balance between theory and hands-on computational skills to analyse life science data. It includes some programming-heavy modules (e.g. Coding for Scientists), which are then complemented with the relevant applied topics (e.g. Post Genome Bioinformatics). The course remains a popular choice amongst medical life-science/genetics graduates; which is reflected on the increased student numbers for this academic year despite the pandemic.

The course structure and syllabus has remained largely unchanged from the previous academic year, apart from some expected updates and adaptation to fit with the online delivery of the course. This seems to have resulted in very good evaluation from the students on their learning experience.

I have also reviewed the assignment questions, submitted course work, marks and feedback provided. 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 impressed by 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 limited time for the Q&A session.

All modules have been highly rated by the students and, they received an even higher rating compared to last year, which shows the continuous effort by the teaching team to achieve top learning experience.

## 2. Standard of student performance

- 2.1 *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**

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

It seems that the weaker students were more impacted with the lack of face-to-face interaction with the teaching team. This pattern is quite similar to what I have noticed within my course over the course of last year, and is a result of changing the mode of delivery from face-to-face to online. It should be noted however that the marks allocated to the module assignments and thesis projects truly reflected the quality of the submitted work.

## 3. Assessment Process

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

**YES**

3.2 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 particularly impressed this year with the level of details on the feedback provided to the students on their thesis report from both first and second markers. The marking scheme was distributed with the assignment briefing and was accurately followed by the markers.

**Taught Modules:** All modules have been highly rated by the students and, they received an even higher rating compared to last year, which shows the continuous effort by the teaching team to achieve top learning experience. I noted however that the “detailed feedback on the assignment” and the “time-frame to receive back marks” sections did receive a slightly lower rating from the students compared to the teaching style and content. This is expected given the very unusual year with the online/hybrid/blended mix of delivery, but it is worth keeping an eye on moving forward.

**Thesis project presentations:** The quality of the presentations (and the students presenting) was very good. This made the long sessions much more enjoyable and is the best testimony to the learning experience provided within this course.

#### 4. Other Issues of Quality

If the answer is ‘no’ for any of the following questions, please give details in the comment box at the end of this section.

Examination papers		Delete as applicable
4.1	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for consulting you on the structure and content of the examination paper(s)?	Yes
4.2	Were your comments on the examination paper(s) properly taken into account?	Yes
Marking and Moderation		Delete as applicable
4.3	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for your moderation of assignments?	Yes
4.4	Did you have sufficient information on the marking scheme(s)?	Yes
4.5	Did you feel that you could fairly assess the quality and consistency of the marking?	Yes
4.6	Was the quality of the marking satisfactory?	Yes
4.7	Were you satisfied that all scripts were double-marked internally (where required)?	Yes
4.8	Were you satisfied with the arrangements to review any practical work?	Yes

4.9	Were you happy with the arrangements for conducting oral examinations/ presentations (where used as part of the assessment for a module)?	<b>Yes</b>
The Examination Board(s)		<b>Delete as applicable</b>
4.10	Were you satisfied with the arrangements for, and conduct of, the examination board meeting?	<b>Yes</b>
4.11	Were you satisfied with the decisions and recommendations of the examination board meeting?	<b>Yes</b>
Assessment		<b>Delete as applicable</b>
4.12	Was the standard of assessment consistent with that of the national university system, so far as you could tell?	<b>Yes</b>
4.13	Were you satisfied with the assessment arrangements for associate students (if applicable)?	<b>NA</b>
<i>Please detail any concerns regarding 4.1 – 4.13.</i>		

## 5. 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 6).*

## 6. General Comments

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

**YES**

6.2 *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.*

6.3 *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.*

**Natalie Holland, the Programme Director and Prof Leitch were all very helpful as ever in providing the required access and paper forms for the exam board meetings.**

**I also quite like the fact that module leaders are invited for the pre-exam board meeting in June, something that most of other institutes do not do. This is particularly helpful in clarifying any issues/doubts that I may have as well as passing any recommendation directly to the people involved with the delivery.**

**Signed:**



**Date: 13.11.2021**