REPORT COVERSHEET FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Name and Title: Prof Michael D Randall
Email: Michael.randall@nottingham.ac.uk
Home institution: University of Nottingham
Award or subject area examined: 2nd MB Mechanisms of Drug Action (MoDA)
Associated University of Cambridge Faculty/Department: Pharmacology

Please tick the statement which most closely reflects your views of the examinations.

The standards set for the award(s) or subject area(s) above were appropriate. The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted.

Any recommendations made are for the purposes of enhancement to the course and its assessment.

The standards set for the award(s) or subject area(s) above were appropriate. The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted.

HOWEVER, there are some risks to the future assurance of the course and its assessment, as outlined in my recommendations.

There are immediate concerns or risks relating to the standards set for the awards or subject areas above and/or the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards.

These require immediate action on behalf of the University to prevent reoccurrence in the next set of examinations.

Please tick as appropriate:

Are you satisfied that you received sufficient programme materials (programme handbooks, regulations, and marking criteria)?

Are you satisfied that you were consulted adequately on draft examination papers, and that the level of questions was appropriate?

Were you given sufficient opportunity to scrutinise the general standard and consistency of marking of examination scripts and coursework?

Have issues raised in previous report(s) been addressed to your satisfaction?

Please return this form, with your full report, to: vcexternalexaminers@admin.cam.ac.uk by July 31st for undergraduate examinations, 1st October for Masters Degrees, and 12th October for resits.
Or: The Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge, The Old Schools, Cambridge, CB2 1TN.
Please also forward copies to your Chair of Examiners.

This form can be downloaded from: http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/examiners/eecoversheet.pdf
NOTES FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Submitting reports to the University

1. All External Examiners are required to submit a written report at the conclusion of their involvement with the examination, and may comment on any aspect of the examination, including the fairness of the assessment and the standards of the candidates for the part of the examination that they are involved with.

2. Reports should be addressed to the Vice-Chancellor of the University; payment of the fee and expenses is conditional on receipt of the report.

3. Full guidance on the roles and responsibilities of External Examiners is provided on appointment. It can also be found at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/examiners/external.html. All External Examiners will receive feedback on their full report in line with University policy.

Report structure and content

4. The written report is made available for discussion by the appropriate Faculty or Department concerned with the examination and by the General Board’s Education Committee. Reports are usually considered by the senior committees of the relevant Faculties and Departments. These committees include student representatives and reports should therefore be written in a form that avoids discussion of individual candidates by name or candidate number.

5. There is no University standard reporting template, but reports are expected to cover four main areas:
   - the extent to which standards are appropriate for the examination and the qualification;
   - the extent to which standards are comparable with similar programmes in other UK institutions with which you are familiar;
   - the extent to which processes for assessment, and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted;
   - any good practice which you feel could be usefully identified for further dissemination.

6. Reports may also include commentary on the following topics, at the discretion of the individual External Examiner:

   **the examination**
   - the design, structure and marking of the examination;
   - the procedures for assessment, including the basis and rationale for any comparisons of standards made;
   - the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort;
   - whether your role is appropriate for the examination to which you were appointed, including whether or not you had sufficient access to any material needed to make the required judgements;

   **the course**
   - the curriculum, its aims, content and development;
   - resources as they impact upon student performance;
   - the quality of teaching and learning, which may be indicated by student performance.

General points

7. Submitted reports will only be used in accordance with General Board policy (for the monitoring of academic standards within the institution) and in line with current legislation.

8. Consistent with Indicator 4 of the QAA’s UK Quality Code (Chapter B7), all External Examiners’ reports will be made available, in full, to all students, with the sole exception of any confidential report, made directly and separately to the Vice-Chancellor.

9. The University shall own the copyright in the reports made to them by External Examiners; in accepting the appointment, External Examiners assign all present and future rights relating to the reports and any other materials created in relation to their appointment. External Examiners will also waive any rights including moral rights in connection with those materials.

10. The University will take reasonable endeavours to ensure the accurate reproduction of material and information provided by External Examiners; all other warranties and undertakings are excluded, including liability for direct or indirect loss to an External Examiner.

11. External Examiners are advised that, under the Data Protection Act 1998, the University will process personal information on its External Examiners.

12. External Examiners are also advised that, under the Freedom of Information Act, the University may be obliged to disclose details of their report on request.
I was asked to review all of the exam papers in good time.

**Multiple choice paper**
This paper represented a comprehensive coverage of Pharmacology and was challenging. As last year, some of the questions focused on highly specific details and detailed factual recall and questions which relate to application of knowledge would improve the paper. Again this format also lends itself to the use of more interpretative questions e.g. based on pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic data.

It was very good to see that my recommendation from last year that the paper was standard set was acted on and this was helpful in terms of setting the borderline for 2nd MB. I would also commend the thorough *post hoc* analysis which was carried out on poorly answered questions.

**Data analysis paper**
Compared to other medical degrees this is a challenging paper and very consistent with the Medical Sciences Tripos and its ethos. It was good to see that my request to provide mark allocations was acted on. For the pharmacokinetics aspect I recommended that the Department consider providing a list of complex equations, so that application was a key element of the assessment.

**Review of papers**
I visited the Department on Wednesday the 13th June and had access to all of the relevant scripts. I would like to commend Dr Van Veen the Senior Examiner for his excellent and efficient hosting of my visit, which made the process transparent and greatly assisted review.

I had access to all of the scripts and can report that the best candidates were outstanding and demonstrated a thorough knowledge of drug action. I reviewed all papers at the borderline and all of the papers deemed to have failed 2nd MB. The marking had been applied fairly and consistently.

I would raise a concern that disproportionately more Veterinary students failed at 2nd MB and this may suggest that these students would benefit from a more Veterinary-focused course.

Overall, I was impressed by the depth and range of assessments, which were overall challenging. The material and assessment are certainly consistent with this level of study of Pharmacology on a medical degree at other Medical Schools. The examination process at the University was fair and consistent.
Professor Michael D Randall
Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor
(Education and Student Experience)
And Professor of Pharmacology
University of Nottingham Medical School
Name and Title: Professor Kim Dora

Email: kim.dora@pharm.ox.ac.uk

Home institution: University of Oxford

Award or subject area examined: Natural Sciences Tripos; Pharmacology Part II

Associated University of Cambridge Faculty/Department: Pharmacology

Please tick the statement which most closely reflects your views of the examinations.

| The standards set for the award(s) or subject area(s) above were appropriate. The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards were sound and fairly conducted. | ✗ |
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Please tick as appropriate:

| Are you satisfied that you received sufficient programme materials (programme handbooks, regulations, and marking criteria)? | ✗ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Are you satisfied that you were consulted adequately on draft examination papers, and that the level of questions was appropriate? | ✗ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Were you given sufficient opportunity to scrutinise the general standard and consistency of marking of examination scripts and coursework? | ✗ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Have issues raised in previous report(s) been addressed to your satisfaction? | ☐ | ☐ | ✗ |

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Dear Vice-Chancellor,

This is the first year that I serve as external examiner for the NST Part II Pharmacology examination, which has been a pleasure with excellent support from the Head of Pharmacology, Professor Mike Edwardson. The examination process of the Pharmacology course is commendably challenging, rigorous and thorough. The exams involve assessment of the students across a broad range of skills, including essay writing and dissertation writing. I was provided ample opportunity to read papers of my choosing. These were selected on the basis of (1) the top student; (2) those students near the degree boundaries having performed well in all papers and the project; and (3) equivalent BBS students for comparison.

The overall standard of performance of the candidates was commendable with the top candidate being truly excellent across all subject areas. Even the student with the bottom mark showed strengths in some areas. From the 34 Pharmacology students, 2 students were chosen for viva, one near the 1st and the other near the 2i boundary. The viva was based on areas of weakness in the examination papers, and questions were also prepared related to their research projects. During their viva, I led the questioning with some input from internal examiners. The candidate near a 1st was not felt by any of the panel to merit a 1st, whilst the other candidate did deserve a 2i. It was apparent that the BBS candidates were generally of an equivalent standard to the Pharmacology students.

In summary, 13 candidates were recommended for a First Class Degree (one required input from her College), equating to 38.2% of the cohort. The remainder were awarded 2i Degrees.

Moving forward to next year, there are two suggested changes:

1) The exam questions should be checked between papers for overlap in topics covered. There were clear cases where one candidate answered the same topic for two papers.

2) It may be prudent to viva all Pharmacology candidates with preliminary marks uplifted to 70.0, alongside those chosen near the boundary.

With kind regards

Kim Dora
University of Oxford