

**External Examiners Report on the MSc in Integrated Immunology
University of Oxford (2010-11)
Final Report**

I have acted as External Examiner on this course for the academic year 2010-11, which is my third and final year. In the course of this year there have been three opportunities for me to assess the students, end of Michaelmas Term (December 2010), end of Hilary Term (March 2011) and end of Trinity Term (September 2011). As previously I have had the opportunity to assess the standards of the students work by seeing their written work, examination scripts and project work, as appropriate, and also by oral examination. I have been able to oversee and comment on the marks awarded and make recommendations regarding the award of passes and/or distinctions.

My overall impression continues to be one of exceptional high standards. As before, the quality of teaching and learning is very high, as is the academic standard expected of the student, and the students have met these standards. I am satisfied with the design, structure and marking of assessments. The assessment procedures are very vigorous and are designed to allow the students to exhibit a full range of skills, including their written, oral and interpretive skills and also their laboratory and technical skills. The examinations have been designed to allow students equity of treatment, particularly bearing in mind that a number of students are from overseas. As far as I am aware, the examinations have been conducted within institutional regulations and guidance.

The performance of the students this year has been excellent and all students have passed the course. Although no students were awarded distinctions, several were very close. A number were unfortunately let down by the requirement that they must have a mark of over 70% in all five assessments. This requirement makes the distinction particularly hard to achieve. The standard of the dissertations was excellent, with the standard of presentation improved over last year. This is likely to be as a direct result of teaching sessions which were designed to achieve improved presentation and a large degree of help and guidance. There were no examples of blatant plagiarism. Throughout the examinations procedure there has always been the opportunity to comment on various aspects of the course and the examinations and these have always been acted on quickly.

I have only one other comment to make and that concerns the case of a late submission of a dissertation. Apparently the usual procedure if the submission is excessively delayed is to fine the student and also to apply an academic penalty. In this instance because the student had mitigating circumstances that were substantiated by their college, there was no academic or financial penalty applied. I am concerned that this sets a precedent and that in the future students may attempt to take advantage of a situation whereby if they can persuade their college to document mitigating circumstances they will have additional time to complete their dissertation and they will not suffer any adverse effect.

I have had experience in examining on other MSc courses at a similar level at other comparable UK HEIs and would say that the standards of student achievement on this course are at least comparable if not greater. A large number of the graduating students go on to undertake further post-graduate education and succeed in their chosen careers. There are many examples of good practice that are evident in this course and I hope that the course will continue to flourish in the future.

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