

# 2023-24 BNU External Examiner Report

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## General Information

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### Section A: External Examiner details and remit

**1. Name of External Examiner\***

Roberto Codella

**2. Name of External Examiner's home institution (or employer for professional appointments)\***

Università degli Studi di Milano

**3. Programme of Study / Subject area being reviewed\***

Basic and Medical Science underpinning the field of Osteopathy as well as Research at ISO Milan

**4. Study Level Note: A separate report should be completed for undergraduate and postgraduate work\***

Undergraduate

**5. BNU School\***

School of Health and Social Care Professions

**6. Partner Institution (if applicable)**

Istituto Superiore di Osteopatia (ISO)

**7. If you selected Other, please specify:**

*No response*

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### Section B: External Examiner's Checklist

**8. Did you receive sufficient information about your duties and responsibilities as an external examiner at BNU? For example, through an induction or development session either this year or in the first year of your appointment?\***

Yes

9. Please indicate how this can be addressed, and what information you would like to receive.

*No response*

10. Did you have sufficient communication and engagement with the programme team to enable you to undertake your role effectively? \*

Yes

11. Please indicate how communication and engagement can be improved.

*No response*

12. Did you find the communication around administrative arrangements appropriate this year? \*

Yes

13. Please indicate how administrative arrangements can be improved.

*No response*

14. Please tick whether you had the opportunity to engage with the programme team / learners on the programme in any of the following activities: (Tick all that apply)

Meeting with the programme team

Meeting with learners on the programme

15. If you selected Other, please specify:

*No response*

16. Did you receive timely notice of and invitation to meetings of relevant Boards of Examiners? \*

Yes

17. Please indicate how this can be improved.

*No response*

18. Programme Specification(s) \*

Yes

19. Programme Handbook(s) \*

Yes

20. Module Descriptor(s) \*

Yes

21. Assessment Brief(s) \*

Yes

**22. Grading Descriptors / Assessment criteria\***

Yes

**23. Regulations, policies and procedures (including any programme specific regulations or exceptions)\***

Yes

**24. Were you provided with a sufficient sample of coursework, marking and moderation information to reach an informed judgement?\***

Yes

**25. Please indicate how this can be improved.**

*No response*

**26. Were you provided with sufficient examination scripts and marking guidelines to enable you clearly to see how marks had been awarded?\***

Yes

**27. Please indicate how this can be improved.**

*No response*

**28. Were suitable arrangements put in place for you to review oral assessments / presentations / performances / placement activities? For example, access to recorded materials, invitations to attend performances, opportunities to visit placements.\***

Yes

**29. Please indicate how this can be improved.**

*No response*

**30. Did you participate in the Board of Examiners meeting(s) for the programme / modules for which you are responsible?\***

Yes

**31. Please indicate why this was the case, e.g. did not receive invitation, invitation was late, there was a scheduling clash etc.**

*No response*

**32. Was the organisation and conduct of these meetings satisfactory\*<sup>\*</sup>**

Yes

**33. Please indicate how this can be improved.**

*No response*

34. Were you satisfied that the assessment regulations were followed in determining student marks, outcomes, classifications and awards?\*

Yes

35. Please indicate how this can be improved.

*No response*

36. Were you satisfied with the decisions reached by the Board?\*

Yes

37. Please indicate why this was the case and what improvements are necessary.

*No response*

38. Did you receive a full response from the University to your previous report?\*

N/A - First year of appointment

39. Have issues raised in previous reports been addressed (or are in the process of being addressed) to your satisfaction?\*

N/A

40. Please indicate any issues that have not been addressed.

*No response*

41. If you have any further comments on any of the points in the checklist please use this space.

The only issue I would raise is the delay in communications needed to finalize my appointment. I had to evaluate both undergraduate and postgraduate courses before actually signing the contract, which was only given to me on September 11, 2024.

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## **Section C: Academic Experience**

42. To what extent is the programme up to date in respect of the latest developments in the subject; research; industrial and professional developments; and developments in teaching and learning, including digital and learning resources?\*

Certainly, the programme is up to date in respect of the latest developments in the subject and professional developments. Research and critical thinking have to be taken continuously in consideration so that students may become very anchored to their professional reality. I am unable to comment on the actual digital possibilities foreseen by the undergrad course in Osteopathy. Certainly, the program remains up-to-date with the latest advancements in both the academic subject matter and professional developments within the field. It effectively integrates current trends and innovations, ensuring that students are well-prepared to meet the evolving demands of their profession. Research and critical thinking have to be taken continuously in consideration: It would allow students to stay grounded in the practical realities of their professional environment, fostering a deep understanding that extends beyond theoretical knowledge. I am unable to provide specific feedback on the digital tools or technological resources incorporated into the undergraduate Osteopathy course, as I have not had sufficient exposure to the program's digital possibilities or online learning platforms.

43. To what extent does the programme provide a coherent learning experience: ensuring an appropriate balance between breadth and depth of content; considering the order in which subject matter and skills are developed; and ensuring key concepts are introduced at the appropriate point in the programme?\*

I appreciated the notable enhancement in the quality of the indicative content, which reflected a higher academic standard. The learning outcomes were comprehensively assessed in alignment with the proposed criteria for each module. Students consistently demonstrated both breadth and depth of knowledge across all modules throughout each year of the course. This indicates a solid understanding of key concepts and an ability to engage critically with the subject matter, reflecting the effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment methods.

**44. To what extent does the programme provide an educational challenge that is no less than the minimum level of rigour and difficulty in the context of the subject matter and academic level?\***

The program essentially has two key pillars in achieving this: 1) the rigorous scientific foundation required for the 3+2 program structure, and 2) the regulatory effort to incorporate these courses into the academic portfolio of universities recognized by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MIUR).

**45. To what extent is the programme effectively delivered, in relation to the way that it is taught, supervised and assessed, ensuring: an appropriate balance between delivery methods (e.g. lectures, seminars, group work, practical study); and an appropriate balance between directed and independent study?\***

As external, I have been able to review the 3 years of the BSc (Hons) and the 2 final years, leading to the MSc Osteopathy, beyond all the other post-graduate programs. I was definitively able to distinguish an actual upgrading of the indicative contents, as the academic level was higher. This 3+2 course provides students with the opportunity to develop core knowledge and skills and to apply this in their development as osteopaths. This 3-year BSc non-practising in Osteopathic Principles course appeared overall very well-structured, capable of offering competitive education and expertise as demonstrated by correspondent employment statistics. Modules per year are widely multidisciplinary covering any aspect of the theoretical and practical knowledge expected for the osteopathic principles. Moreover, students are guided to a constant update of their competences thanks to the evidence base of the various osteopathic approaches being studied. This is of a particular strength, awarding the ISO standards to the level of other prestigious academic institutions.

**46. To what extent does the programme require learners to develop relevant skills, including technical proficiency in the English language?\***

I believe the program is well-designed, as it effectively combines theory and practice in both languages, allowing students to develop professional proficiency in English in addition to Italian.

## **Section D: Assessment and Awards**

**47. The methods of assessment employed are appropriate to the nature of the subject area (including PSRB requirements as applicable), the types of learners recruited and their different requirements, and the general level of study.\***

The nature and level of assessment tasks are broadly in keeping with comparable institutions. A decent range of assessments has been used at ISO Milan and it is encouraging to see this being developed.

**48. Assessment tasks effectively and rigorously assess the contribution of individual learners, ensuring consistency, credibility and fairness of marks awarded. Please also comment on the extent to which assessment tasks assess technical proficiency in the English language\***

Learners have the opportunity to practice technical English in various contexts, ranging from practical scenarios to journal clubs (where clinical dilemmas from the literature are discussed). Additionally, they are exposed to evaluations through diverse media, including videos and pamphlets, further enriching their professional communication skills.

**49. The quality of, and extent to which learners receive feedback on their assessed work, focusing specifically on how feedback enables learners to improve in future assessments.\***

Overall, markings were widely ranging the students in a constructive and mindful spirit through different modules, being offered to the students in a constructive and mindful spirit.

**50. Assessment was carried out in accordance with the relevant module descriptors and University procedures, and whether moderation was conducted in a satisfactory manner. Please also use this space to make any comments on the appropriateness of the University's regulations used to determine the classification of a learner's overall performance.\***

Feedback was given to the students in a constructive spirit. Scripts are fairly ordered and systematic, combining basic knowledge, critical thinking and crucial skills. The increased use of marking criteria and marking grids seems to be helpful to develop this skill in their lecturers and this was a noted improvement. Hopefully this will help to develop greater consistency across different modules and different levels. We keep encouraging teachers in avoiding short/limited comments so to guide students towards proactive and independent study.

**51. The Board of Examiners procedures that you observed were carried out rigorously, fairly, consistently and in accordance with the University's regulations, ensuring consideration of exceptional circumstances for individual learners as necessary.\***

I have not identified any exceptional circumstances that need to be included or commented on in the aforementioned scenario. Therefore I am unable to comment on this.

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## **Section E: Student Performance**

**52. Please comment on the overall standards of performance of learners and the standard of their achievement in relation to the performance and standards of learners across the UK, including Good Honours attainment.\***

I am unable to complete this as I do not teach in the UK.

**53. For those examiners who review work at one or more of the University's partner institutions, please comment as appropriate on the comparability of performance between the University and partner provision for which you are responsible.**

Based on the modules and assessments reviewed, student performance is generally consistent with the standards observed at other institutions where I am involved. As expected, there is a range of results across most modules, reflecting the diverse capabilities of the student cohort. Notably, certain areas have produced particularly strong outcomes, highlighting instances of exceptional achievement.

**54. Please comment on the general strengths and weaknesses of learners' performance.\***

The range of subject areas, as indicated in the module descriptors and assessments, reflects a good breadth and depth. As a minor comment, the outline of teachings and competencies could be more closely anchored to the osteopath-practitioner scenario from the very beginning of the BSc (Hons). Encouraging decision-making, problem-solving, and addressing critical dilemmas related to osteopathic practice whenever possible would be beneficial. At times, the theoretical content may be overly demanding and not directly linked to the students' professional scenarios (e.g., physics, electromagnetism, the solar system).

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## **Section F: Standards**

**55. Please comment on the extent to which the programme meets sector recognised standards, by reference (as applicable) to the relevant level of the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications Framework (FHEQ), Subject Benchmark Statements, PSRB Standards of Proficiency, credit arrangements, and Classification descriptors for Level 6 Bachelors' degrees.\***

The Istituto Superiore di Osteopatia (ISO) is currently not required to meet national academic benchmarks, as it has not yet been included in the academic portfolio of universities recognized by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MIUR). However, its assessment standards are appropriately aligned with those of its British partner, ensuring a level of consistency and quality that prepares ISO for recognition as an independent institution in line with UK regulations. It is anticipated that MIUR

will amend its regulations to formally acknowledge the academic structure of these osteopathic courses, paving the way for future inclusion. The nature and level of the assessment tasks are broadly aligned with those at comparable institutions. The achievement of students in the modules I examined is broadly equivalent to comparable institutions. I keep encouraging lecturers in introducing students into their professional scenarios whenever possible (even from level 4) so to develop keen critical thinking and problem solving skills. ISO Milan has implemented a diverse range of assessments, which is a positive sign of pedagogical development. It's encouraging to see the variety and depth of these assessments being expanded, ensuring that students are tested across different competencies and learning styles.

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## **Section G: Higher and degree apprenticeship programmes - Page 1**

56. Is the programme for which you are responsible a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship?

No - Proceed to the next section

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## **Section G: Higher and degree apprenticeship programmes - Page 2**

57. Please comment on the extent to which the programme is aligned to the relevant Apprenticeship Standard requirements, including: Coverage of the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) Alignment to the assessment plan, including preparation for End Point Assessment (EPA) Opportunities for learners to achieve the required standards of Maths and English proficiency Delivery of the 20% 'off the job' learning requirement\*

*No response*

58. Please also comment on the extent to which the programme embeds Equality and Diversity, Prevent, Safeguarding, and British Values requirements\*

*No response*

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## **Section H: Learners in practice / on clinical placements - Page 1**

59. Does your external examiner appointment require you to visit and report on learners in practice / on placement? (Note: This will normally only apply to accredited healthcare programmes leading to professional registration)

No - Go to next section

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## **Section H: Learners in practice / on clinical placements - Page 2**

60. Please comment on the extent to which you were able to visit the practice / placement setting and meet with learners in practice.\*

*No response*

61. Please comment on the extent to which practice-based learning opportunities were effective in enabling learners to meet placement requirements and preparing them to meet professional standards for registration.\*

*No response*

**62. Please comment on the extent to which arrangements for the assessment of practice were satisfactory, ensuring you had a clear understanding of how marks had been achieved.\***

*No response*

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## **Section I: Enhancement and Review**

**63. Please make any further comments you would like (including suggestions for improvement) in respect of: The documentation received (programme specification, module descriptors, assessment materials etc.); Overall strengths and weaknesses of the programme; Good practice and possible enhancements which you have identified; The University's policies and procedures which relate to the work of external examiners.\***

As I mentioned earlier, the students have demonstrated a strong commitment and passion for pursuing their careers as osteopathic practitioners. To support their development, it is essential to continuously integrate research, critique, journal clubs, critical thinking, problem-solving, and clinical case discussions into their curriculum. These elements are crucial for ensuring that students remain deeply connected to their professional reality, equipping them with the tools needed to thrive in a constantly evolving healthcare environment. Examples of Good Practice Noted The increased use of marking grids and marking criteria, ensuring transparency and consistency in assessments. The course team, including lecturers, are fully engaged with the course's delivery and development. Their positive responses to feedback highlight their dedication and commitment to continuous improvement, which is commendable. Examples of Enhanced Student Learning Opportunities Noted The increased use of case vignettes (diagrams, depictions) and case studies across assessments demonstrates a comprehensive and innovative approach to learning. This method fosters critical thinking and enhances students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios. Essential Actions Ensure that all theoretical concepts are directly relevant to osteopathic practice, maintaining a strong connection between academic knowledge and practical application. Whenever possible, expose students to real-life clinical scenarios to train them in handling clinical dilemmas. This will reinforce the integration of theory and practice, preparing them for real-world challenges. Increase opportunities for students to discuss original articles (through journal clubs) and review up-to-date literature. This will enhance their familiarity with scientific approaches, research critique, and thesis drafting. Advisable Actions Continue using a full-range scale for marks and assessments. This will ensure fair recognition of student efforts while encouraging independent study and practical application. Improve the quality of theses, whether they are systematic reviews or original experimental works. Providing structured guidelines will assist students in meeting standard university criteria and producing higher-quality research. It is important to ensure that the work is appropriate for the academic level. Desirable Actions Provide students with learning difficulties more detailed and analytical feedback to support their development. In this regard, further refine and expand assessment forms to ensure all students receive the guidance they need. Offer more preparatory tasks throughout each year to develop skills necessary for thesis writing. Encourage students to engage in written communication, critical thinking, and logical analysis, ensuring they are well-prepared for the final project.

**64. For external examiners in their final year of appointment (normally four years), please provide an overview of your term of office, commenting on whether quality and standards have been maintained consistently, any enhancements to the programme noted, and how the University has responded to any issues you have raised during your appointment.\***

I have just been appointed at BNU/ISO. There was a significant delay in receiving my contract of appointment and the details regarding my job duties. However, all the information I received about both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes was exhaustive, self-explanatory, and well-introduced by the Dean of ISO.