

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION*Subject area and awards being examined:*

School of:	Subject(s):
Programme(s) / Module(s):	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)
MA in Teaching	Masters
Masters in teaching and Learning (MTL)	

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to:

Head of Academic Quality and Standards,
Academic Quality and Standards Team,
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building,
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

PART B: COMMENTS FOR THE INSTITUTION ON THE EXAMINATION PROCESS AND STANDARDS***Matters for Urgent Attention***

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box.

None

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

Yes

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School.

Not applicable

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award?

- *The appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The intended learning outcomes of both the MA in Teaching and the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) clearly address the needs of serving teachers. Although there are some differences between the two programmes, such as the fact that the MTL is a pass only award, the structure and content of each is similar in that both are firmly grounded in professional practice and the theory that informs it. The standards applied to both awards are rigorous and on a par with those in other HEIs. This latter point is noteworthy since the MTL differs from the Masters in Teaching in that it was conceived of as an 'entitlement' for a particular target group of teachers – those newly appointed in 'National Challenge' schools, irrespective of the quality of their first degree. Bearing this in mind, it is particularly commendable that the university has maintained its academic standards, as is evidenced by the failure rate in the early modules.

2. Did the aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Both programmes are consistent with national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and, as previously stated, comparable to those offered elsewhere.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs?

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

Initially I raised the following questions about the assessment process, mainly in terms of the MTL:

1. Is the 'presentation' element assessed by the same marker and made explicit in the overall assessment?
2. Re Module 1, it refers in the Module Handbook (p3) as a module 'which all participants take'. Do they? Are some exempted?
3. Do students have an introduction to essay writing at this level?
4. Do school-based coaches have an explicit role to check assignment drafts?
5. Blind marking – an issue?
6. Low pass rate – is it a cause for concern and in any way connected to the approach to second marking where the convergence appears unusually close: 42/43-47/48-46/45-54/55-47/48-50/46-52/49-42/42?

The programme leader's response to these questions provided the clarification I had sought in good measure. For example, re questions 5 and 6, it was made clear that what I had wrongly construed as second marking is in fact moderation.

Over the year I have moderated **40 assignments** providing a representative sample from both programmes. Across the programmes the quality of marking and feedback is consistently high: rigorous, yet sensitive to the needs of the students and the employment-based context in which they are working. I felt particularly privileged to endorse Professor Scott's astute marking at this sad time.

The modules sampled were:

EDUC 5406M	Reflecting on Professional Practice (7)
EDUC 5407M	Developing Professional Enquiry Skills (14)
EDUC 5407M	Directed Study (1)
EDUC 5408M	Dynamics of teaching, learning and assessment (4)
EDUC 5752M	The 14 – 19 Curriculum (2)
EDUC 5630M	Noticing and observing (3)
EDUC 5631M	Promoting and assessing learning in the classroom (9)

As can be readily seen, the modules are sensibly embedded in professional practice and offer students considerable scope to adapt the titles to their own experience and their respective teaching subjects whilst requiring them to critique their own classroom practice in relation to the academic literature.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

The module specifications are sufficiently flexible to allow for a personalised student response and it is evident from these responses that the programmes cater for a broad range of student ability. At the top end of the range in the MA Teaching, I wrote of one student 'This is a very compelling and academically rigorous assignment that is beautifully written. It is good to see markers so euphoric'. At the bare pass end I wrote of another student '<<>> does not engage critically with the subject – lack of depth. It is soundly written in parts, but needs to proof-read <<>> work'. On balance – and as I would expect in view of the unrepresentative nature of the target group – the MTL appears to yield lesser marks overall, although I would need further hard evidence of this judgement. It may transpire that as the weaker ones either drop out or improve the assessment profile will improve.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

Not applicable.

6. The nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

The introduction of the MTL has presented a challenge to all those HEIs involved in its development and Leeds has made a very good fist of it and overcome some of the negative criticisms that have been levelled at it: that it is somehow spurious and inferior to conventional masters programmes. I am pleased to hear that although the programme will not continue in its present form that a different employment-based route has been drafted that includes in it the best features both of the MTL and the MA Teaching and will provide a more attractive offer to teachers in schools. The idea of a 'bespoke' masters that is being actively pursued is an exciting enterprise.

7. The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

The notion of a research led teaching profession is imbricated throughout the present masters provision and forms a natural progression from the PGCE and I applaud this development and refinement at Leeds. The journey will be a slow one and the MTL has been the first step in that direction and I have no doubt that Leeds will be in the forefront in improving the self-esteem and the public profile of teachers over the next several years.

The Examination Process

8. **The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?**

- *Whether external examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

The documentary guidance and the module specifications have been excellent, as has been the administrative support.

9. **Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks?**

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

As above.

10. **Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?**

I have certainly received ample evidence of the students' work on which to base my judgements.

11. **Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?**

Very satisfactory. The separate meeting of the examiners prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners was particularly useful. We agreed the following positive features of the provision for all programmes:

- Annotated scripts helpful;
- The proposed introduction of a personal tutor system;
- Variety of assessment modes – portfolios, presentations, on-line;
- Review of ethical procedures;
- Very positive feedback from students;
- Research-led teaching;

The Board of Examiners meeting itself was smoothly organised, efficient and rigorous.

12. **Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**

Yes.

For Examiners involved in Mentoring Arrangements

If you have acted as a mentor to a new external examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements.

Not applicable

Other Comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form.

It has been a pleasure to engage in discussion with both programme leaders about individual students and about programme developments. It is always difficult to improve on good quality provision, yet they both listen attentively to my observations and respect my input, especially as it relates to plans for the future. I wish them well with their imaginative endeavours and look forward to working with them over the coming year.



15 February 2012

Dear

Thank you for you for your joint report on the MA in Teaching and MA in Teaching and Learning programmes.

We are pleased that you recognise the rigour of these programmes and confirm that high academic standards have been maintained. The positive comments that you make about the quality of marking and feedback are also most welcome. We recognise the points that you raise about the different groups of students on these two programmes and the different mark profiles that result. We share your view that the development of teachers who are capable of rigorous research into their own practice is of considerable importance to the profession, and we are delighted that you think we are progressing in the right direction with this.

Thank you again for your supportive comments.

Yours sincerely

Head, School of Education