

## The University of Leeds

## EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	Education
Subject(s):	National Curriculum Subjects
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Primary PGCE – EDUC5526M – Primary English, EDUC5528M – Primary Science, EDUC5527M – Primary Maths, EDUC5525M – Education and Professional Studies, EDUC3415 – Foundation Subject Studies, EDUC3420 – Primary Practical Teaching
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCE

**Completed report**

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

NA

**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?*

NA

**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*

NA

**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.*

I can confirm that the aims and intended learning outcomes for all modules that I examined are appropriate for the award of PGCE and that the standards achieved are appropriate.

**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.*

I can confirm that the standards achieved are commensurate with other institutions offering the same award.

**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.*

The following comments are based on the analysis of the work of six students - 30 assignments in total across five assignments. A key strength of the assessed work for this programme is the way in which students are encouraged to incorporate elements from their school experience to critically reflect and develop their own argument. This sets them up well for their career in the teaching profession as well as preparing them appropriately to continue their academic work to complete their master's qualification.

Each of the assignments is appropriate in developing expertise as a primary teacher. The high profile of behaviour management in the current education context makes the EPS assignment (EDUC3415) focus an appropriate one, and further, sets them up well for beginning their teaching experience.

The English assignment (EDUC5528M) provides a useful opportunity for students to analyse the language and learning profile of one pupil in depth. A strength of this assignment is the opportunity to integrate several Profile Development Record (PDR) tasks and as identified above, it would have been helpful to have seen this work to identify how it supported the assignments. Feedback for this assignment was particularly helpful in encouraging particular students to challenge generalisations that they made, particularly relating to EAL matters. These comments may be due to the students' lack of experience of working in schools with EAL pupils but I understand that the team is addressing this by trying to encourage schools in ethnically diverse areas to be involved in the Partnership.

The mathematics assignment (EDUC5525M) also incorporates an element of school-based work and provides a useful opportunity for students to identify and address misconceptions in a particular area of mathematics. Again I understand that students were able to draw on appendix material but I am unable to comment on this.

The science assignments (EDUC5527M) that I moderated all is the last piece of academic assessed work to be submitted and whilst it doesn't formally draw on a specific directed task, students are expected to draw on their experience of teaching and observing science lessons. Whilst it is recognised that many schools block the teaching of science and therefore some students may not observe much teaching in this area in the early part of the course, I wonder whether one of the other assignments which would benefit for more time in school on which to reflect may be more suited to being submitted at this point of the programme. For example, the Foundation subject assignment (EDUC3415) is submitted early in the programme and because of the nature of foundation subjects, it is unlikely that students will have had much opportunity to observe many of their selected subject choice lessons. However, despite the timing of this assignment, the standards achieved are similar to other assessed work.

**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 academic standards demonstrated compare appropriately with other similar courses. There were clearly articulated marking criteria for the assignments and in addition to this students were provided with an assessment grid which tutors used (in different ways) to assess the work. This is not returned to the students and it would be useful for the team to consider the potential benefits of students being included in this process so that they can see clearly which criteria they responded to well and how their mark was calculated.

The very best assignments were those where students had successfully integrated theoretical and empirical research with their experience in schools to develop a critical argument. Many of those were also able to critically reflect on their experience to date. The weakest students failed to address the question and many of these students included irrelevant observations and general sweeping statements.

I felt that the references used to support the assignments were rather limited and I would expect a wider range of articles from peer reviewed journals to be included in reference lists. There was a heavy reliance on core texts and this indicated a rather limited attempt at a review of the literature. I also felt that the standard of referencing was rather weak and although some markers commented on this, there was not consistency across the marking team or across assignments. I didn't see any assignments that used page referencing appropriately and this was never commented on. The course team might want to consider recommending the academic writing support provided by the university for those trainees requiring additional support but also to make expectations clear for the whole cohort early on in the course.

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

NA

6. **Please comment on 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.*

There has been considerable development to the partnership this year with the introduction of the cluster model. I had the opportunity to visit three schools involved in two different clusters and all members of the partnership (students, mentors, cluster coordinators, class teachers and link tutors) were extremely positive about the experience. What was particularly impressive was the consideration about the schools involved in the cluster, which was entirely based around ensuring a range of experience for students. One cluster identified that students had very limited of working with EAL pupils within their cluster and steps are being made to encourage a more diverse school to join the cluster to ensure students had a range of experience.

A further strength of this new model is the engagement of schools in providing training on parts of the EPS programme. In one cluster this is called "Theory into practice" and ensures that students have a theoretical grounding, together with an opportunity to see this in practice and time to reflect and discuss this.

7. **Please comment on 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.*

From my scrutiny of course support material and discussion with students, it is clear that the lecturing team are informed by relevant research and that this is highlighted during discussion in teaching sessions and in support material. Some modules were referred to more favourably because of the ideas that they had for use in the classroom and they were keen to have this across modules. However the strongest students recognised the importance of having a theoretical understanding in their teaching.

#### **For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements**

8. **If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements**

NA

## The Examination/Assessment Process

**9. 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.*

Yes it was.

**10. 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, marking criteria?**

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

I found it particularly helpful to have all the assessed work for a group of students as it enabled me to see their progression through the course. It would have been helpful to have had the module handbooks so that I could see the specific guidance that the students had had for each assignment. It would also have been helpful to have had a copy of the PDR tasks booklet prior to the visit so that I could see how these tasks were used to support the assignments. I understand that the submission of assignments has changed this year in the move to electronic submission but this meant that external examiners were not able to see the annotations on the scripts where this happened. It would be helpful to see this as it is a valuable addition to the feedback that students have. It would also be helpful to have the appendices that students submit to support their assignment. In some assessed work, particularly the English assignment, this aspect is crucial.

**11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?**

NA - students do not sit examinations on this programme.

**12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?**

Yes, I was able to see the whole profile of work submitted by six students across a range of levels. As indicated above, all feedback sheets were provided, together with second markers' comments where applicable but it wasn't possible to see any annotations.

**13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?**

NA - students do not complete dissertations on this programme.

**14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?**

All arrangements were very well organised and I was able to see a range of students in school. However I did not feel that I had sufficient opportunity to discuss recent changes in the course or to provide informal feedback from visits to schools and discussions with students. I feel it would be beneficial to dedicate more time to this in the future as although I recognise the importance of seeing a sample of students teaching, time could have perhaps been organised to see several students in the same school to cut down on the travel time to allow time for this useful discussion.

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

Medical evidence wasn't discussed at the board although there were two students who were extending their placement due to extenuating circumstances.

## Other comments

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

Currently students on this course complete five assignments and this will reduce to four next academic year. I would suggest that the course team consider whether alternative modes of assessment might be more effective in examining the learning intentions of one or more of the modules. For example poster presentations or individual presentations are effective in determining the extent to which students understand particular concepts. This would help to equip students with important skills necessary in teaching and may help to reduce the time taken for academic staff involved in marking.

The number of PDR tasks that students have to complete was frequently brought up by mentors and students. It is a requirement that each of these tasks are formally completed and signed off by their mentors. Given the time taken towards the end of the school experience to plan, assess and evaluate their teaching, I wondered whether the course team considered whether there was scope for merging some of these tasks or reducing the formal requirement for them to be written up.

One final suggestion is that the course team considers how to ensure that all members of the partnership receive adequate training in using OfSTED criteria to grade every lesson - a new initiative for 2013-14. This will be highly effective in ensuring that all students are aware of how well they are meeting the standards.

31 October 2013

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Dear <>

Thank you for your helpful and supportive report. We are pleased that you recognise a number of positive aspects of our Primary PGCE programmes, for example, the appropriateness of the assignments and the positive progress in partnership development,

Diversifying the modes of assignment might not work in the students' interests. By using just one mode, that is, essays, students have the opportunity to draw on the feedback from one assignment to inform the next, for example, by improving their academic writing skills. Nevertheless, we will consider the suggestion that you have made. Each year we review the sequence of essay assignments and try to order them in such a way that best supports the students. We have reviewed this again since receiving your report but have decided not to change the current sequence. This was discussed at a Primary PGCE Tutor meeting where it was agreed that the current sequencing is most appropriate in relation to ensuring that there are opportunities for school-based work to feed into the assignments. Next year there will not be a Foundation Subjects assignment as we have been conscious of the need to reduce the overall work load for the students. We will consider your suggestions about how the general Assessment Criteria are used and seek to establish greater consistency across the assignments. We have already discussed the points you raised about referencing and academic writing and have identified strategies to improve these aspects of students' work. However, we would like to suggest that the sample of assignments that you saw did not accurately reflect the feedback that tutors provide to students on referencing.

We will ensure that you receive all the programme documentation in good time next year. Given the current procedures for submitting assignments it might not be possible to provide you with annotated script. However, it should be possible to provide assignment appendices. You will be aware that we have already responded to your request to build in more time during your visit to meet with tutors for discussions and to provide feedback.

In relation to your suggestion about rationalising the PDR Tasks we can report that we have done this, as far as we can, for next year. Some of the tasks need to be timed for the end of the second Block Teaching Experience, e.g., the tasks about using National Curriculum levels and writing reports

to parents. We will be including training about using our new framework for grading students' lessons in all Link Tutor and Mentor training sessions, we fully appreciate the importance of this. Thank you again for your very positive comments and the very helpful guidance and advice that you have provided in this report. We look forward to seeing you again later in the year.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education