

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:	School of Education
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	EDUC5532M Secondary MFL; EDUC5500M; EDUC5501M; EDUC 3425; EDUC3457; EDUC3458; EDUC3479
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCE Secondary with QTS

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.

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

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

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 standard and level of the student work I observed was appropriate for the level of the award being made. The Intended Learning Outcomes are clearly appropriate for the programme. They are clearly reflected in the structure and content of the programme and conveyed to students. Students feel that the course prepares them very well to teach in the secondary classroom and they, and their mentors, have a sound knowledge of the national professional Standards which all trainee teachers are required to meet.

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.*

The programme is of a standard consistent with other Russell group Universities. Tutors have very high expectations of themselves, students and mentors. Some of the student work I observed was of an exceptionally high standard. The programme has some features which distinguish it from other comparable universities, such as a pastoral tutor whose remit is to support students who are non-native speakers of English. This tutor, and the service he offers, is highly valued by students and seems to enhance student performance.

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.*

There have been some initial problems with the e-profile but these may largely be attributed to its introduction this year. Students' criticisms of it as excessively time-consuming may be due to their, and their tutors' and mentors', lack of familiarity with it. Steps have already been taken to ensure that mentors and students receive clearer guidance on how to manage the e-profile next year. These guidelines address the importance of weekly monitoring of the e-profile by the mentor; students' reports suggest that this was not generally practised this year.

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.*

As on any PGCE course, a range of ability was evident, especially in the written assignments and in students' ability to evaluate their own teaching. However, on the whole, I was very impressed by the way in which students were able to articulate their strengths and areas for development, both verbally and in writing. The vast majority are clearly able to write and reflect at a level consistent with Masters courses and the support they are given by their tutors enables them to achieve their full potential. The team should be commended for their commitment to their students which goes above and beyond what might be expected.

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

I visited three students in school, representing a range of ability, and observed them teaching. I agreed with the final grades awarded by tutors and mentors. I was also able to observe two of the students engaged in post-lesson debrief with their school-based mentor and the University tutor. The quality of the post-lesson feedback given in one case was excellent, especially since the student was outstanding and, typically, mentors may struggle to find suitable targets for such students. Feedback was less satisfactory in the other case and this may be attributed to the new mentor's lack of experience. This also appeared to influence the quality of the provision received by the student in the school during his second teaching experience.

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.

Since this is the first year of my appointment I am not able to comment on enhancements since the previous year. It is clear, however, that the Secondary PGCE team are highly responsive to suggestions and recommendations. A number of recommendations made by Externals at the Exam Board in June were already being implemented in July in preparation for 2013-14.

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.

Students undertake a small action research-based task in school which forms the basis of one of their assignments. The brevity of this assignment did not allow students to explore the data and findings in any depth and I am informed that this assignment will be extended in next year's programme to allow for greater depth of analysis.

The students I met in a focus group informed me that they would like to do more pre-seminar reading. The role of academic reading in University-based work might be an issue for staff to consider.

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

N/A

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.*

Helpful guidance was provided in the form of a handbook and questions regarding my role were answered promptly, and in full, by staff.

School-based mentors and students were not well-informed about the role of the External Examiner and this might be an area for the School to address.

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 received marking criteria for assignments and the Code of Practice on Assessment as well as the Educational and Professional Studies handbooks, the Modern Foreign Languages module handbook and the generic course handbook. The MFL tutors kindly gave up their time to brief me in more detail on the individual students I visited and to answer my questions. The Secondary PGCE Programme Director also met with Externals before the Exam Board.

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?

I did not see draft assignments but was able to consider the suitability of assignment titles. The level of the assignments is, on the whole, commensurate with Masters level and the titles and guidance enable students to apply theory to practice and to apply a range of scholarly skills.

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 saw a good sample of students' written assignments, some of which had been second marked. I also had the opportunity to look at re-submissions after they had been marked. Very helpful and detailed formative feedback was given and the full range of grades applied. The second marking system clearly works well with scholarly dialogue taking place between the first and second marker when there is disagreement. A few second markers' comments were addressed to the student although students would not have access to these. Students clearly write at Masters level and stronger students are able to engage critically with theory and research literature.

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

As stated above, the majority of assignments to which I had access were marked with great attention to detail and students benefited from very helpful, targeted formative feedback. In a minority of cases markers did not indicate to students how they might have achieved a higher grade but resorted to summarising the content of the assignment, focusing especially on the positive points. This might be an aspect of assessment in which

the team strives to achieve consistency.

There is some student dissatisfaction with the non-assessed tasks which students in some subjects are required to complete since they receive no feedback.

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?

Yes, I was able to attend the Board. Administrative arrangements for the Board were highly satisfactory due to the hard work and organisational skills of administrators and I was happy with the recommendations of the Board.

The consensus of the External Examiners was that the PGCE team might usefully consider bringing them in somewhat earlier in future years in order to carry out school visits. This would reduce the pressure on schools and students in the final days of school placement, as well as on administrative staff, and allow the team to consider at an earlier stage any recommendations made by the Externals with a view to modifying the course the following year.

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

Yes, and such cases were handled with appropriate sensitivity.

Other comments

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

I was asked to look at the effectiveness of the two 'transition weeks' which students complete at the end of the course. It would seem that the most effective model is one where students spend one week in the school where they have been appointed and one week in an environment that enhances their teaching skills, rather than spending two weeks in their new school.

I was also asked to look at schools' provision of opportunities for students to enhance their skills in the area of teaching pupils who have English as an Additional Language. While this seems to be well covered at the University, with linguists, for instance, reporting on a particularly effective seminar with chemistry PGCE students, it is not yet covered well in all partnership schools.

I would like to congratulate all staff on their contributions to an excellent course which is very highly rated by their students and school-based mentors.

31 October 2013

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Dear <>

We are very grateful to you for your helpful and supportive report. Your insightful comments will be considered and discussed by colleagues in some detail and will lead, I am sure, to enhanced PGCE provision not just in MFL but across our Secondary PGCE provision .

We were delighted with your very encouraging observations on a number of dimensions of the course: the excellence of our provision and how highly rated it is by students and school-based mentors; students feel well prepared to teach in the secondary classroom; mentors and students have a sound knowledge of the Standards; tutors have high expectations of themselves, their students and mentors; the unique role of the personal tutor with specific responsibility for non-native speakers of English and the positive impact this has on student performance; students' ability to identify their strengths and areas for development; tutors' commitment to supporting their students; tutors' responsiveness to Externals' suggestions; tutors' willingness to support External Examiners in their role; detailed feedback provided by tutors on written assignments; the effectiveness of the second marking system; the effectiveness of administrative arrangements. We are also very grateful for your identification of areas which would benefit from some attention and your helpful recommendations for improvement.

The first year of implementation of the new eProfile has been challenging for students, tutors and mentors. We were aware of the problematic issues as a result of ongoing monitoring and requests for feedback from all parties. Issues which could be addressed in-house were dealt with as they arose. Issues beyond our competence were forwarded to Paragon, the company which constructs the eProfile and, in the majority of cases, they corrected the faults efficiently. As you rightly identify in your report, guidelines are already in place which should prove helpful in obviating the 2012-13 problems. The handbooks for 2013-14 (including the new Mentor Handbook) contain much more information about the eProfile, its purpose and how it should be used. This includes specific dates on which the eProfile should be checked by mentors and personal tutors and a document where it has to be confirmed that checking has taken place. This will be supplemented by eProfile specific EPS sessions as well as more hands-on training sessions for students, mentors and personal tutors. In the course of your school visits, you identified some inconsistency in mentors' provision of post-lesson feedback. This is disappointing in the light of the mentor training we provide, as well as the guidelines published on the eProfile in relation to the 'post-lesson discussion' and 'target setting'. (This is now also available in the new Mentor Handbook.) We will continue to give this central dimension to the mentor's role our close attention in future mentor training sessions and discussions with mentors and ITE co-ordinators.

We shared your concern about the length of the school-based, research assignment. For 2013-14, the word limit has been increased from 3000 to 4000.

We were very interested to learn of students' interest in more pre-seminar reading. Whilst we do encourage students to support their work on enquiry-based learning tasks with appropriate reading, we will consider giving this more structure and provide more guidance.

We were disappointed that the students and mentors to whom you spoke articulated some uncertainty in relation to the role of the External Examiner. Each year this is explained to both parties in advance of the school visits. To address this issue in preparation for 2013-14, a section has been devoted to it in the handbooks and the letters sent to relevant students and mentors next year will contain more detailed information.

Your comments on the marking of assignments are appreciated. In future team meetings we will certainly address the issue of a minority of tutors summarising content rather than offering guidance on how a higher mark might be achieved. In relation to students' concerns that non-assessed tasks might not even be looked at, changes made to the eProfile which require personal tutors and mentors to check it on fixed dates, should help address this.

External Examiners' request that the dates for school visits should be brought forward has been addressed. We look forward to welcoming you on 14-15 May 2014, one week earlier than has traditionally been the case.

Thank you for reporting on themes identified by the Head of Secondary PGCE. Significant changes have been made to 'transition weeks' (now 'enhancement weeks') for the new academic year. Teaching pupils with EAL remains an area of concern and will be a topic on the agenda of forthcoming Team and Partnership meetings.

We appreciate very much the time, effort and consideration you have given not only to this extremely helpful report but also to your very positive contribution during the course of your visit in May.

With sincere thanks and best wishes

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education