

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

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

School of: Education Programme(s) / Module(s): Primary PGCE	Subject(s): awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Primary) with QTS Professional Certificate in Education (Primary) with QTS Postgraduate Certificate in Education Studies (Primary)
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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.

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?

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.

During the term of appointment I have seen a number of positive and progressive changes across the course.

In terms of the enhancement of the learning and teaching provision:

- The Key Stage 1 issues, regarding placements, are now effective in supporting the students' learning across the primary phase. Students are meeting this national requirement for the course.
- The professional studies programme (EPS) has become more consistent from a student perspective over the four years.
- Effective communication between the University, partnership schools and students ensures that the students overall make good progress in their learning.
- English has achieved a balance between early reading and phonics (Key Stage 1) and persuasive writing (Key Stage 2). With the EAL day it appears to be really meeting the student's needs and current national agendas.
- Science has been consistently very good/excellent throughout, with other subject areas e.g. history, geography and Primary Modern Foreign Language using science as a model of good practice for the benefit of all students.
- The introduction of Primary Modern Foreign Language teaching for all students from 2009 is fully supporting the students with this change to the primary curriculum and is highly rated by the students.
- Issues regarding teaching and learning for ICT (2007-08) and mathematics (2009-2010) have been effectively addressed.
- The continuous review and refinement of the documentation, over the four years, is resulting in students who can clearly articulate how it supports their learning and how it helps them to become more effective practitioners through self-reflection. SBTs who acknowledge how the documentation helps them to support the students

effectively.

- Over the last four years the course has implemented appropriate changes to all aspects e.g. inclusion of more cross-curricular opportunities, to ensure that it continues to be 'up-to-date' with current national agendas to ensure that the students are well prepared for their role in school as primary teachers.

The academic standards achieved by the students have been maintained across the four years with some very good M-level students, who wish to continue to build on their M-level credits, provided with the opportunity for continuing to work to full Masters accreditation. The professional (QTS) standards achieved have been maintained. For this year I especially noticed the number of good and very good students who achieved the QTS Standards.

For marking and assessment:

- Issues raised in 2007-08 about the different levels in quality of feedback and the way the feedback enabled the students to develop further (2007-08 and 2008-09) are now being addressed with students reporting in 2009-10 that the feedback provided was helpful in moving them on in their learning.
- By 2009-10 all the work was being moderated appropriately and this has continued this year. This met comments made from 2007-08 and 2008-09 reports.
- The assessments, in terms of assignments, have been related to current topics and the specified criteria have provided the opportunities for the students to respond appropriately at Masters level.
- The school based tasks and activities reflect the needs of primary teachers today.

Procedures of the School have always been highly effective and efficient and provide a model of excellent practice. The Board runs effectively, efficiently and smoothly due to the preparedness of the documentation by the Administrators and very effective chairing. Any queries from me to staff in the School have been dealt with promptly and effectively.

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 were appropriate within the structure and content of the programme. The standards are appropriate for the awards with clear delineation between level 3 (professional) and Masters Level (postgraduate). The award of Postgraduate Certificate in Education Studies (Primary) is very appropriate for students who do not meet the QTS standards. The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) within the modules constructed for achieving the QTS standards (as defined by the TDA 2007)) are appropriate.

The structure of the programme is appropriate with a preferred and alternative key stage being offered to the students in terms of the placements. The programme continues to provide opportunities for developing appropriate subject knowledge across all primary subjects, with an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics, science and professional studies, and with respect to theories and principles relating to the associated pedagogies.

For English the students I met felt that they were prepared for early reading and phonics and had had their confidence further developed by the support provided by the School-based Tutors (SBTs). They also stated that the EAL day was considered to be very good in supporting their knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to this area. They valued this experience.

Generally the students I met felt that the mathematics sessions had enabled them to gain the appropriate subject knowledge and understanding to further develop their skills in the teaching of the subject. Those students who were very confident already with mathematics said that the programme was good. For those students who were less confident with the subject they felt that more practical teaching examples in sessions would have provided them with additional support.

Science, geography and Primary Modern Foreign Language teaching was highlighted by the students as providing very good 'models of practice.' As last year, in science the students found a very good balance between the knowledge/theory of the subject and practical activities for developing this subject in schools. There were suggestions for all age groups and all the sessions were very well organised and resourced. From the students' perspective there was agreement that, "Science was excellent." Geography sessions were described as being similar to science in providing a very good balance between knowledge/theory and how to develop engaging teaching activities for the children. Again, as last year, the Primary Modern Foreign Language sessions not only provided the students with the necessary subject knowledge about teaching a language, but really enhanced their confidence. One student stated, "We really just wanted more of them because they were so motivating and enjoyable."

The students welcomed having sessions on all the foundation subject areas, as they realised this was a very positive aspect of the course, and one that distinguished this course from some other similar courses. However, the

students I met did say that Religious Education (RE) sessions were weak and not very helpful, either for developing knowledge and understanding about the religions or for the teaching aspects of this subject area. The sessions had not given them confidence to teach in this area. This was also raised as an issue last year through the student group, but I am aware that a new member of staff has been appointed for the development of RE for 2011-12. There were some concerns, expressed by the student group, about the amount of time spent on music and the rather "repetitive" nature of the sessions. Only one student in the group had taught any music on placement, as the other students were reporting that often the teaching of music is carried out by 'specialist' teachers who were coming into the schools. I would suggest that this may need further review to see whether this is a pattern across the whole cohort.

There was some variability being expressed by the students I met, in terms of their perceptions, about the school placement experiences. Out of the focus group of six students two students highly praised both placement experiences and said that they had been supported to achieve the QTS standards at the highest level; two others stated they had one good and one not so good experience and could clearly articulate what for them had made the difference; and the final two in the group perceived that their experiences had been difficult/poor in supporting them to become teachers, yet when questioned further were not really able to specifically identify why. The five students I saw in their placement schools all reported very good placement experiences that had supported their learning and on-going progress towards becoming an effective teacher. It maybe useful for the course team to consider how the students themselves are prepared for placement in terms of 'expectations' as to what they as students need to do, with the school staff e.g. class teacher, mentor, SBT to ensure the experience is effective – to become a more pro-active participant in the process.

Generally most of the students had learned from their placement experiences although the focus group students did think mentoring is sometimes variable, which mirrored the previous paragraph. A number of the students reported that they had had some very good school-based tutors who had really supported them very effectively and this was certainly the case in the schools I visited. Overall the Link Tutors had been very supportive and available when needed, and were especially praised when there had been any issue, by both the students and school-based tutors.

The course documentation has been reviewed and revised again for this year and is very comprehensive. Overall the documentation was viewed positively by the students and the school-based tutors. The students were clear about the professional tasks and how they supported their learning; the school-based tutors were clear about what was required and why. All the documentation I saw on the visits had been fully completed by both the students and school-based tutor. In most cases the progress of the students could be seen through the on-going target setting process and student lesson evaluations. The school-based tutors also reported that the documentation was effective in supporting all students when used correctly.

The School-based Tutors (SBTs) valued highly the support they had from the University and felt that communication was efficient; any request/query was dealt with quickly and effectively. All the tutors I met reported that they had found the students were well prepared for the placements. As last year, the students also really appreciated the prompt feedback they had received and appreciated its high quality. This was further evidenced through all of the student's files I saw. Generally the SBTs appreciated the training they received from the University finding it useful and valuable in supporting their work.

This year I was also able to meet a new Link Tutor. It was obvious that the link tutor was being very well supported by the University and had attended all the training sessions. They stated that the information they had was very comprehensive and that the role was clear. Any queries/problems were dealt with effectively and efficiently by University staff. School-based Tutors had been very welcoming and helpful in also supporting the new link tutor.

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 aims and ILOs were comparable and consistent to other similar courses that I have seen and been involved with. Students seen in the placement schools were very effectively working on the QTS standards where the grading was secure and well-evidenced and therefore standards were consistent with other providers. Those students working at M-level and level 3 covered a range that of academic work that would be expected and this was reflected in the grading of the work.

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 assessment methods were principally through specific written assignments and professional tasks and the assessment of school placement experiences against the QTS standards. The five assignments were spread appropriately across the course.

As last year I reviewed, as a sample, the work of six students across the four M-level assignments in English, mathematics, science and professional studies and one level 3 assignment in a foundation subject area. I also reviewed the work of two additional students in science and mathematics to ensure that I could see a spread across all the marks for each area. All had criteria set, guidance given and the relationship to the QTS standards identified. Each assignment was clearly designed to enable the students to show their knowledge and understanding of the subject; the theory/practice links and the potential to reflect on how it could inform their future practice as a teacher.

The students who were achieving the higher marks continued to show that they could produce work that was very well written and appropriately structured; provided evidence of a range of reading, from academic and professional sources, that was critically analysed and synthesised to support arguments and views. In all cases this work that was creating insights into their practice. Those with lower grades provided a valid response to the different elements but showed a general need to read more widely and use their reading to support their arguments/views. There was less critical analysis and synthesis and they were less clear about how their practice may be affected – so showing weaker theory/practice understanding. All the students I met reported that they felt supported with M-level writing.

Specified 'professional' tasks were carried out as part of the placement experiences and supported the QTS standards. From the files seen during placement visits these were being completed to a good/high standard.

All the work in the sample had been marked appropriately with a proportion being second marked. Feedback was given on the assignments and the students appreciated this stating that it was useful and helpful in developing their learning and moving them on. All the work was being moderated.

Whilst it can be difficult to directly link the teaching to the assessment grades, as many additional factors may contribute to overall student achievement and their personal learning, the students were very clear that the work in the placement schools had contributed significantly to their knowledge, skills and understanding. They highlighted the teaching of science, geography and Primary Modern Foreign languages by the University tutors as being really useful for their learning with the clear emphasis on theory and pedagogy. They valued the fact that all the foundation subjects had specific sessions. Overall they felt that their subject knowledge and understanding had been developed across all the subject areas of the primary curriculum, to a greater or lesser extent dependent upon the individual student's previous knowledge and experience. No attendance issues to any of the sessions were brought to my attention by the students 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.*

The assignments and tasks continue to give the students a range of opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and the ILOs. The academic standards and professional standards were comparable to other similar courses.

The discussion with a group of six students (three male and three female) and the five students (two male and three female) seen in the school placements indicated that they were of high calibre; highly articulate, thoughtful and reflective and potentially demanding and challenging. The students showed they were confident, well prepared to become teachers and professional. For those students who were graded as 'outstanding' they were starting to show how personal reflection was aiding their development and understood how this could inform future practice and how this could be implemented. Some of these students were setting themselves really challenging personal targets and were clearly showing that they were prepared to 'take risks' to provide the children with engaging, motivating and very creative lessons and activities to support their learning. All the students I saw on in their placement schools were showing really effective behaviour and classroom management skills. The students were providing high quality planning documents that were being actively used to inform future practice through effective evaluation. In the main, the students that I met stated that overall the programme was really good, if somewhat intense. They had clearly learned a great deal and they did feel prepared for their first year as primary teachers and realised that their confidence had really developed over the course of the year, along with their knowledge, skills and understanding of primary education.

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

N/A

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.

I am pleased to report the following areas appear to have been addressed:

- No specific issues were raised regarding all students having a placement in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 of the programme this year. I am also aware of the revision to the course for 2011-12 to further provide a potential mechanism for reducing the pressure on Key Stage 1 places, which continues to be a national issue.
- There appears to have been an improvement with the University teaching of mathematics following some changes to staffing. Generally students felt that they were making progress in the subject.
- No issues were reported around ICT. Students appeared to find the sessions of value and appreciated how ICT was used within other subject areas to facilitate the childrens' learning.
- No issues were reported around student attendance this year in any sessions.
- There were no issues reported, or seen in documentation, around quality assurance issues regarding consistency with respect to course requirements. SBTs felt well supported and appropriately trained. Consistency was shown between the SBTs and Link Tutors requirements in terms of evidence etc.
- The School-based Tutors I met were clearly enabling the students to move onto 'good' and 'outstanding' in terms of the QTS standards.
- The discussions with the students I met, and the files of those on placements, clearly provided evidence that the students are being encouraged through self-reflection to set appropriate, and in some cases challenging, personal targets to further enhance their progress in collaboration with the SBTs/mentors.

Areas which you may wish to review or continue to review:

- Religious Education foundation subject teaching continues to be an issue. This may not be the case for 2011-12 with the new staff appointment.
- Gather further information regarding the issues highlighted by the focus group regarding the development of music to ensure students are confident to teach the subject if required.
- The issue regarding variability, as perceived by the students, in terms of placement experience. It may be useful to consider how to prepare the students to work effectively with the SBTs/mentors to ensure they realise that they have to be a pro-active participant in the process.

Good Practice

- Geography sessions are now incorporating the 'good practice' seen in science and PML in terms of the good balance between the knowledge/theory of the subject and practical activities for developing this subject in schools. Dissemination of this way of constructing sessions in science, geography and Primary Modern Foreign Language – and last year for history – across other subject areas could be considered.
- Documentation and assignments which clearly support the students learning throughout the course.
- The External Examining Process and the operation of the Board

Areas of strength:

- Communication throughout the course with all partners continues to be a real strength of the course and acknowledged by the range of active partners both University and school.
- The knowledge of the individual students as exemplified through the Board and student feedback..
- Reviewed and revised documentation which supports students' learning and SBTs/mentor support.
- Coverage of all the primary foundation subject areas.
- Recruitment of high calibre students.
- Students' capacity for self evaluation and reflection.
- Overall student satisfaction with the course.

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 core curriculum elements of the course were informed by current research e.g. science. For English the work completed by the English department regarding working with EAL children and bilingual learners is also being reflected in aspects of the course and through a successful EAL day.

I was also impressed with some of the student's desire to continue their own personal research on areas of interest e.g. special educational needs through continuing on the Masters programme at the University.

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.*

Yes. The material I reviewed was sufficient to make the required judgments. For the assignments I reviewed samples across the entire mark range. For the student files I not only saw those files of the students I visited on placement, but also three files of students who were on the pass/fail QTS borderline. This enabled me to see the full range of files from pass/fail borderline to outstanding students. On all occasions the staff at the university checked that I had all that I required to carry out my work and more would have been made available if I had requested it.

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.*

Yes. The documentation was provided in a timely fashion and access to additional materials was available on-line and on a data stick.

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

Yes. I received the four major written assessments for English, mathematics, science and professional studies which were at M-level and the foundation subject assignment at level 3 across a range of six students (male and female). I saw five students in their final placements again across a range of students from outstanding to unsatisfactory (two male and three female). All the students had their files available for scrutiny and I was therefore able to review other tasks/activities relating to professional elements of the course. I therefore am confident with my evaluation of the standards as detailed above.

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

Yes. I would like to thank the administrative staff and the course team, during the year, for their prompt responses to any queries e.g. with receipt of paperwork and documents supporting the sampled work. The accommodation booked for my stay was very good and the course team provided a very comprehensive programme for the visit. My time was used very effectively and appropriately. The effective way that the administrative staff produced the assessment sheets through the use of effective colour coding was exemplary and ensured that the operation of the Board of Examiners ran extremely smoothly. The Chair of the Board was also very effective in ensuring the meeting was efficient and effective. I would say that the administrative arrangements and the operation of the Board continue to show excellent practice.

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

Yes. For the few students for whom the above applied it was very obvious that the course team knew the students very well and knew the situations and were aware of what was now required. I would consider this strength of the course.

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.

Other Comments

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

In response to a request last year, I really appreciated the opportunity to see a greater spread of students in schools from unsatisfactory to outstanding with respect to meeting the QTS standards and from a balance of gender and maturity this year.

I would like to thank the whole team for their continued support and organisation for this year's visit.

Last year I have to report that despite submitting my report on the 23rd June 2010 I did not receive any payment until February 2011. I had to follow up on why I had not been paid but never received any comments. The previous year I had been paid in October 2009. The Faculty has always paid my travel and subsistence expenses promptly. I do hope that this will not be the case in this my final year.

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

10 October 2011

Dear

Thank you for your report and the helpful advice therein. It is particularly pleasing to read that you received positive feedback from the students about how well prepared they felt for teaching early reading and phonics. Equally pleasing was the positive feedback about mathematics as this is an area where some students can lack confidence. We do feel that we do a good job in relation to developing students' subject knowledge across the full range of primary subjects and your comments confirm this. We have already taken action to improve the Religious Education sessions by employing a tutor who is a RE Co-ordinator in a partnership school. I have discussed the issue you raise about some students' comments about the repetitive nature of music sessions with the relevant tutor. I can report that he has given a clear and satisfactory rationale for the content and structure of the sessions.

You report that two students had experienced a disappointing level of support in one of their placement schools. We understand that high quality support from School-based Tutors is essential if students are to be challenged and we have identified this (the provision of high quality support) as a focus for our school-based tutor training sessions next year. The point you raise about the consistency of School-based Tutor support will also be addressed with Link Tutors who will be asked to be more vigilant in identifying and addressing issues. You make some very positive comments about the work of our Link Tutors and we believe that we have a very effective team.

In relation to written assignments we recognise what you say about the need for some students to read more widely in preparing their essays. We will give greater emphasis to this during sessions where assignments are being discussed. Given the priority that this now being given to behaviour management (at a national level) we are pleased that you judged the students you saw teaching as being 'really effective' in this respect.

The challenge and support you have provided over the last four years have played an important part in our programme development and improvement. May I take this opportunity to thank you for all your hard work on our behalf and to wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Professor Geoff Hayward
Head of School of Education