

## The University of Leeds

### EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010– 2011

#### PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

*Subject area and awards being examined:*

<b>School of:</b> Education	<b>Subject(s):</b> English and MFL	
<b>Programme(s) / Module(s):</b> PGCE Secondary – Method MFL and English and EPS and School Placement	<b>awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.)</b>	PGCE – Postgraduate and Professional

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](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.*

##### **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.*

The Programme seems to me to have developed quite considerably over my four year period. The current programme leader is responsive to the suggestions of the external examining team and is keen to discuss ideas for the future with us, which has made me feel that our contributions have been welcomed and worthwhile.

I have also found engaging in this professional dialogue very useful for reflecting on my PGCE course.

Particular current strengths are the detailed action planning and responsiveness to suggestions already mentioned, which, along with the strong and dedicated team work at Leeds, make the future health of the programme seem well assured.

Changes that have taken place over the period of this time have included

- the right to resit the final school placement in the following September, enabling a few additional students to succeed in completing the course
- a greater focus on the need to extend and challenge pupils, involve all pupils in learning and use a wider range of class management strategies. This was incorporated into advanced lesson planning during the year 2010-2011
- suggestions made about how the external examining itself could be made more effective e.g. some assignments sent earlier, time to discuss with each other and time to discuss with the programme leader and see the action plan, were all implemented. These actions seem to have made the external examiners' role more productive.

The standards achieved by the students at Leeds have continued to be very good, particularly with academic assignments but also in terms of creative and innovative classroom ideas. Marking is rigorously carried out and academic procedures seem to be tight and well established.

## 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 learning outcomes are all appropriate for a PGCE course as are the standards demanded for awards at Postgraduate and Professional Graduate levels.

### 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 compares with other programmes at these levels (level 6 and level 7) and makes use of national benchmarks for academic work at these levels.

### 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.*

Assessment methods have been well designed and specific titles have been modified to meet the suggestions of the examining team and in response to student evaluations from the previous year.

I would suggest that greater standardisation/ moderation/ use of specific assessment criteria for school placement grades by mentors would be advisable. Grades given by teachers for the lessons I observed align closely with those given by me. However, I am sure that further clarity of how the overall placement grades and individual lesson grades have been arrived at by school staff would be helpful to the PGCE team. As plans are under way to increase mentor training in the forthcoming year, this should help with this aspect.

### 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.*

Academic work shows that students are able to attain a range of grades, including some very high ones. Less able students are able to attain an award at Professional level (level 6) and all students are given clear feedback and annotations by their tutors on their strengths and weaknesses. Overall levels of performance are commensurate with comparable courses.

The assignments, as I have mentioned in previous years, allow students to both develop their knowledge and understanding of theory and to reflect on their application to practice, which is very helpful.

#### Classroom practice strengths

- Manner and demeanour in the classroom and building of positive relationships
- The structuring of learning, through careful planning
- The quality of communication with pupils, including creating an atmosphere through tone of voice and the asking of probing questions

#### Aspects for further development

- More use of peer talk/ dialogue in lessons
- Including further challenges/ extension tasks (e.g. even better if) and sharing success criteria (e.g. what a good one looks like)
- Checking that all pupils understand instructions before moving on and waiting for complete silence before giving them

#### Academic strengths

- The best students show very good synthesis of a range of appropriate literature with their own professional practice and that of others they have observed in their placement schools
- Many students show a critical and analytic approach to their reading and their experiences

- Some students have clearly found that the assignments themselves have enabled/ assisted them in developing their understanding

Aspects for further development

- Some students remain descriptive rather than analytic in their approach to their sources
- Some of the students at a higher level of attainment need to interrogate their sources and to question received ideas

However, these aspects are typical of the range of student academic skills/ ability seen on PGCE courses.

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

**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 have already commented on these above. I feel that the close relationship of theory to practice within the design of assignments is a particular strength as it enables students to make links that are important to their continued professional development into reflective classroom practitioners.

**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 last –research - assignment engages the students directly in their own action research. All the other assignments expect the students to consider contemporary research findings and to use them to inform their practice.

### ***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.*

Sufficient materials were made available to me.

**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.*

Appropriate documentation was received – particularly relating to the assignments. It is pleasing to note that much of the documentation is now available on the VLE but it would be useful to have access to this, particularly to the new student profile, for those students we were observing at their placement schools.

It would have been good to have had the schedule for the schools, staff and students we were to visit a little earlier if possible.

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

Yes.

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

The Board of Examiners meeting is always run efficiently and effectively, such that I feel entirely confident in the administration arrangements for awards.

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

Yes. Tutors were well aware of any mitigating circumstances and these were always discussed, when appropriate, and in an appropriate manner, as part of the normal proceedings.

***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 case their comments are of any use to you, I would like to give feedback from the panel of students with whom I spoke on the day of the Exam Board.

When asked about their favourite session, the trainees cited the one on class management in which real life examples had been given, scenarios discussed and some role play carried out.

Students suggested that they would have benefitted from more sessions on:

- practical strategies for differentiation
- planning whole schemes of work
- planning for EAL learners
- GCSE controlled assessment marking practice
- Specific learning difficulties as related to their particular subjects

They concurred with my observation that their assignments had entailed a very good combination of theory and practice and that this had helped them to synthesise their understanding. "Doing the assignments keeps you focussed on learning theory and informs your decisions". They found the assignments relevant and applicable to their practice and said they had learnt a lot from undertaking them. They also found the guidance for completing the assignments very helpful.

A suggestion for improving the assignments further was to get feedback about the previous assignment before they started writing the next one – even if just comments without a mark.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my association with Leeds University PGCE and would like to wish the programme team every success for the future.

Many thanks to all,

School of Education

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

10 October 2011

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your final report and your continued support over the past few years with our PGCE programme. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for encouragement you have offered with respect to the recent development of the course and thank you for your valued contributions which we are beginning to see made an impact.

We would like to review some of the points under consideration in your report:

*Aspects for further development:*

*Some students remain descriptive rather than analytic in their approach to their sources*

*Some of the students at a higher level of attainment need to integrate their sources and to question received ideas.*

Along with other comments from the external examiner team, we will place a bigger emphasis on writing support in the first tutorial. Furthermore, as the EPA programme develops, Method tutors are putting a greater emphasis on the EPS course threads in Method sessions to help trainees see the relevance of their academic work in the PGCE.

And we welcome the following:

*A suggestion for improving the assignments further was to get feedback about the previous assignment before they started writing the next one*

You will be aware that the number of assignments is being reduced from four to three and we expect this, amongst other benefits, to allow a more even spread of work load and time for feedback across the year.

With respect to the EPS programme, we welcome the feedback from trainees:

*Students suggested that they would have benefitted from more sessions on:*

- *practical strategies for differentiation*
- *planning whole schemes of work*
- *planning for EAL learners*
- *GCSE controlled assessment marking practice*
- *Specific learning difficulties as related to their particular subjects*

As the programme is still under development, we will be refining the content in the coming academic year and there will be a particular emphasis on the national priorities, including SEN and EAL.

Your comments about grading by schools are welcomed:

*I would suggest that greater standardisation/ moderation/ use of specific assessment criteria for school placement grades by mentors would be advisable.*

*As plans are under way to increase mentor training in the forthcoming year, this should help with this respect.*

Indeed, mentor training will be a big focus over the next academic year, with more twilight, school-based bespoke sessions being offered where teachers cannot attend the university-based sessions.

We are also reviewing how we include evidence about our trainees from their academic assignments in their final teaching grades.

We would like to thank you for the excellent service you have offered the university during your time as an external examiner and hope you have gained equally from the experience.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Professor Geoff Hayward  
Head of School of Education