

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): Biology Chemistry Physics
Education Programme(s) / Module(s): Post Graduate Certificate in Education	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) Post Graduate Certificate in Education with QTS Professional Certificate in Education with QTS

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.

No

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?

n/a

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.

n/a

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.*

As with the previous report the programmes aims and learning outcomes are appropriate for the award of Post Graduate Certificate in education with QTS with Masters credits and Professional Certificate in Education with QTS. The structure of the programme enables the students to achieve the learning outcomes being well supported both by University tutors and by the school based mentors. The subject content of the science courses enables the students to meet the required external standards.

My observation of the students on teaching practice, the opportunity to talk to a group of them about their experiences, and by reading a wide selection of assignments, I can confirm that the standards achieved are appropriate for the awards made.

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.*

By observing the students teach, discussing the standards for QTS and reading a selection of assignment work, I can confirm that the programme enables the students to meet these TDA standards required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status. These aims and learning outcomes of the course are comparable with similar institutions offering the award.

The standard of the Masters level assignments that form part of the PGCE award are also comparable with other institutions offering the PGCE award at Masters level.

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 assignments offer the students an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching in light of published research and begin to take ownership of their own professional development. These assignments are appropriate to the intended learning outcomes, although an opportunity to consider selected aspects in more depth would enhance the learning opportunities further. The assessment of the practical teaching element of the course is appropriate and the grades that the school based mentors are awarding are consistent with those at similar institutions.

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 assessments and assignments do give the majority of the students the opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved the aims and ILOs as indicated earlier these are of comparable standards to those in similar institutions. The assessment criteria are clearly available to the students and they are used by some students to enable them to produce some excellent work demonstrating an ability to critically engage with literature and to be reflective on their own practice. Weaker students found aspects of the assignments more challenging, and further early intervention to support these students could be considered, however having a professional route for these students to ensure they can complete a differentiated pathway is a very useful option. On the whole the feedback given to the students particularly on the scripts is very good. A large number being second marked indicating a rigorous system.

The practical teaching elements of the PGCE are well organised. The students spoke highly of their school based mentors and felt further supported whilst on placement by their university based tutors. The grading of the lessons was clear to both the mentors and the students and this gives them confidence on what they can do and clear guidance on how to make improvements. The grades were also consistent with similar students at different institutions.

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.

It has been particularly welcoming to hear of the positive comments from all the students with whom I met of the EPS programme. This has been amended and is in a different format from the previous year. The students found this engaging and informative supporting their professional practice. They also found that it linked clearly with the school based programmes and with the subject specific work. This is a clear example of innovative practice from the course team that has developed and enhanced the learning opportunities for the students.

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 Masters level assignments do require the students individually to engage with current research on teaching and learning. Evidence from lesson plans and discussions with the students indicates that they have had the opportunity to be made aware of some of the current ideas and theories in education through their university based sessions.

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 material made available was adequate to enable the required judgements to be made both in terms of observing students teaching and also in considering the assignment work. There was also the opportunity to talk to students towards the end of the course, which is very informative. The course team had responded to suggestions from the previous report in providing assignments during the year and making available action plans and similar documents.

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.*

These were available when needed. Additionally questions were quickly answered with regards to the policies and procedures for the course.

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

Yes adequate assignments were made available and being spread over a longer time frame allowed for a more detailed consideration of these.

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

Yes the administrative elements were satisfactory, both by the course leader and also the administrative team. The main Board and resit Board were also satisfactorily arranged

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

Yes as indicated with one particular student whom I was asked to see.

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.

The students did comment positively on the course which they had enjoyed although they had found it challenging and hard work. They felt that they were prepared to begin teaching and were looking forward to starting the next stage of their careers as teachers in school. They felt supported both by the school based mentors and the university tutors. In particular they mentioned the positive support from the course leader and his input into the generic elements of the course.

They felt the tasks and assignments of the course were appropriate and understood the rationale of them in the context of the profession. They felt the administration was clear and transparent.

There have been several changes to the course over this academic year, some being in response to the comments from the external examiners. The development of the course has led to an enhancement of the learning opportunities for the PGCE students. The discussion with the other external examiners and the course leader over the changes that had been implemented since the last academic year was useful. It was also helpful that suggestions were responded to; for instance in terms of the earlier availability of assignments to moderate. It was extremely useful to have a discussion and look at the Action Plan for the department and to be able to comment and advise on this. The proposed developments will further enhance the course and enable the student to develop their own reflective practice and teaching, particular with the Masters assignments. It would be useful if these additions could continue in future.

As a suggestion to the team; given the clear Action Plan for the course it may be useful for you to direct the external examiners to additionally focus on certain aspects on this Action Plan, whilst in schools and engaging with the students, this may further help support the development of the course.

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

10 October 2011

Dear

Many thanks for your continued work with our external examiner team and for your report and support for the action planning process. I would also like to thank you for the encouragement you have offered for both the current course content and the future developments.

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

Weaker students found aspects of the assignments more challenging, and further early intervention to support these students could be considered

This has clearly been an issue, but we welcome your suggestions to ensure the focus of the first tutorial be based around writing support. Your later comments about the development of the EPS programme:

It has been particularly welcoming to hear of the positive comments from all the students with whom I met of the EPS programme

...are encouraging in our quest to ensure trainees see the relevance of the academic work involved with their initial teacher training programme, which of course help to support their academic assignments.

With respect to the contribution by the external examiners to the action planning process, we welcome your comment:

There have been several changes to the course over this academic year, some being in response to the comments from the external examiners

But also consider your further suggestion:

...given the clear Action Plan for the course it may be useful for you to direct the external examiners to additionally focus on certain aspects on this Action Plan, whilst in schools and engaging with the students

This would be really useful feedback in terms of metrics for our action plan points.

Finally, can I thank you once again for being instrumental in initiating discussions and development points for the action plan. We look forward to sharing your thoughts with a new team of external examiners in the coming academic year.

For your diary, please note that our **external examiners' visits for 2010-11 are on Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 May and the Exam Board is on Thursday 14 June.**

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Professor Geoff Hayward
Head of School of Education