

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:	ELSS/Sociology and Social Policy
Subject(s):	<i>MA Disability Studies</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	SLSP5414M SLSP5601M SLSP5605M
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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

None

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

This is a well-run, engaging and wide-ranging Master degree. IT remains iconic as a site to study disability studies globally. The course team are close-knit and programme staff are very aware of wider pastoral issues and know their students well.

The course is challenging and stretches students, especially those studying in distance learning mode.

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.*

Learning outcomes are appropriate and link carefully to the stated aims of the programme and constituent module content.

Standards are pitched at a level commensurate with MA study and similar provision elsewhere

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.*

Comparable and meets Masters degree generic benchmarks and advanced study in social policy and sociology

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.*

Well designed and structured assessments that well to module aims.

Moderation is taking place and comments suitably congruent so that students get clear feedback on the best/more limited aspects of their 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.*

Comparable performance. A small tail of weaker students in each cohort-this reflects the diverse pathways applicants have taken in reaching the MA.

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. 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.

No changes requested

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.

Research-led teaching in the main. I would have liked to see some updating of material to reflect changing debates in disability theory and research. There seems to be a little too much reliance on say emancipatory research.

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.*

Yes, always well supported as EE in this institution.

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.*

Yes, comprehensive

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?

No examinations on this MA, but I was provided with module guides well in advance of examining these assessments

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, just right

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

Yes, a wide range of marks and topics-there were some outstanding dissertations once again.

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, the MA has now entered a merged examination board process-I am content with the way the board was handled and was convinced the nuances of each constituent MA was well understood. The board was competently chaired.

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

Yes, the arrangements seemed quite removed from the decision-making of the MA board-but this is defensible in terms of the sensitivity of some mitigation materials-information was handled carefully in the main MA board to that end.

Other comments

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

I have ended my tenure as external examiner as I have now become a member of staff at the University of Leeds.

I have had an exceptional time as external examiner and have been impressed at the stewardship of the MA.

School of Sociology and Social Policy

The University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

7th January 2014

Dear

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2012/13 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School.

The School is encouraged by your positive comments, particularly in relation to the high standard of the students' work and the commitment of the staff. We have noted your suggestion to enhance the course content by including more emphasis on contemporary debates disability theory and research and we look forward to working with you to develop this in the future.

Once again may I thank you for your work as an External Examiner on behalf of the School.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School

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:

Sociology and Social Policy

Subject(s):

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Postgraduate diploma/MA Disability Studies, Disability Studies and Social Policy, Disability Studies and Health and Illness, Disability, Racism and Ethnicity, Disability and Global development, Disability and Special Education, Distance learning MA/diploma Disability Studies,

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

Completed report

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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

There are no matters for urgent attention

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?

All relevant documentation was received on time and instructions for completion were clear and concise. I was made aware of the structure of the degree and the role of the external examiner.

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

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 ILO's for all the courses moderated are appropriate and relevant to the courses. The curricula of each of the modules examined were also relevant to the ILOs for those modules and overall the modules were a good fit to the courses.

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 work of the students that was moderate in my experience is comparable with similar modules from similar institutions.

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 are comparable to other courses in similar institutions and are appropriate to the courses and the modules. The different modules allow the students to experience a range of different topics and assessment methods.

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 work moderated reflected the full range of quality although it is clear that most of the students are producing very good work. The University of Leeds is recognised as a centre of excellence for disability studies and this expertise is reflected in the very high quality of work produced by the majority of students. This is evidenced by the extensive range of literature cited by the students in their essays and the high quality of the research work carried out as part of the dissertation process.

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. 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.

n/a

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.

The quality of the majority of dissertations is extremely high. Not only do the students take on a range of interesting, relevant and in some cases important topics, they are clearly able to transfer the theoretical elements of their course and apply them within a practical research context. This reflects well on both the teaching at the theoretical level but also the supervision of the dissertation.

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

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.*

All information supplied was sufficient and where there were any gaps or problems either the administrator or the course coordinator were able to provide the answers.

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.*

Yes.

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?

N/A I was appointed mid-year after exam papers and assessments had been set.

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 received examples of the full range of marks.
The feedback to the students was very good and full and would allow the students to fully understand the basis on which the mark was given. The students were also given good advice on how to improve future work.

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

Yes. The students chose some varied and appropriate topics and they were very fairly assessed.
There is some concern about the choice of some topics that may be a little bit too sensitive for Masters work and whilst it is clear that the students are given good supervision and are working ethically the course team might want to look at the choice of topics available and weigh up whether the potential to upset research informants outweighs the academic gain.

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. The board ran very smoothly and the whole process from start to finish proceeded in a timely manner. The administrators, the the course coordinator and the overall director of masters programmes were excellent in their various roles.

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

Yes, although perhaps at time too much information was given about individual candidates. It should be enough that the board is told that an individual has special circumstances and these should be taken on trust. We do not normally need to hear about the cause of those circumstances in any detail.

Other comments

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

School of Sociology and Social Policy

The University of Leeds
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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

7th January 2014

Dear

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your External Examiner's report for the 2012/13 academic year and to thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of the School.

The School is encouraged by your positive comments, particularly in relation to the high standard of the student's work and the commitment of the staff. We are pleased that you noted that our students are able to engage in theoretically informed research. In future we will seek to ensure that the recommendations of the School Special Cases Committee are more effectively communicated at the Examination Board.

I hope you have enjoyed your first months with us as an external examiner and may I thank you, once again, for your work on behalf of the School. Your contribution is appreciated by the whole School and we look forward to working with you in the forthcoming year.

Yours sincerely^{h/d}

Head of School