

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:

Centre for Lifelong Learning

Subject(s):

Pre-Degree Education

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Preparation for Higher Education and ISFY (Science Foundation Year)

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

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

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?

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

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.*

PHE programme – the ILOs are appropriate for the programme
ISFY - the ILOs are appropriate for the programme

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.*

Both Programmes were comparable to other pre-degree programmes offered elsewhere

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.*

PHE programme – this is a successful programme that has been developed over time and the assessment methods and marking are appropriate for the programme and the ILOs
ISFY – this programme is in the process of being moved in-house having previously been taught in an FE College, there are consequently discrepancies in places with regards to the assessment methods and marking, but these are being addressed by the course team. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is particularly good in the modules which are delivered in-house.

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 wide variety of assessment on both programmes gave students the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs.

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.

ISFY – the course team are working hard to ensure a consistent programme during the transition period from delivery in the FE College to deliver within the university. This move, once completed, will be of great benefit to students, allowing them to engage in HE practices which are a vital part of this type of programme.

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.

It was clear from my visit to the CLLL that the staff involved are clearly conversant with the relevant pedagogy regarding students from widening participation backgrounds.

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 mentoring support offered has been very valuable

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.*

Both the material and the opportunity to discuss the role with the course teams were extremely useful in helping me act as an External Examiner

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.*

The documentation was good.

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 receive all draft examinations or assessments. The nature and level of the questions set were appropriate, seen after the fact in some cases.

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?

There was a high level of assessed and examined work available for me and I was confident that I was able to judge the standard of the student work. There was some variation in the marking/annotation of scripts which I discussed with the course team, although there was enough evidence in all cases to be able to judge the standard of marking.

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

N/A

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?

The administrative arrangements were excellent and the whole process went very smoothly? I felt that the recommendations of the board were appropriate and satisfactory.

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

Every student with mitigating circumstances and medical evidence was noted in the exam board, with clear evidence of a previous meeting to discuss the circumstances and appropriate outcomes.

Other comments

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

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28th November 2012

Dear <>,

External Examiner's Report for 2011-12

Over the last few months we have been reflecting on the feedback that we have received on 2011-12 from our students, teaching staff and External Examiners. I am now writing to each Examiner to respond to reports individually and to give an overview of the outcomes of this annual review process.

We are pleased to find that you have formed a generally positive impression of our Foundation Year provision in your first year as External Examiner. It is good to know that the programmes are comparable to those in other universities, are delivered to appropriate standards and learning outcomes and offer a sufficient variety of assessments to enable students to demonstrate their achievements. We are encouraged too, to note your observation that teaching staff are "clearly conversant with the relevant pedagogy regarding students from widening participation backgrounds" and to see your endorsement of our conduct of assessment processes and our engagement with you as External Examiner.

You make a couple of observations in your report that we are planning to address during 2012-13 as follows:

Interdisciplinary Science: At a number of points you discuss the impact of the current arrangements in which most modules on this programme are delivered for the University by an FE college. You note that this leads to "discrepancies in places with regards to the assessment methods and marking" and observe that "the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is particularly good in the modules which are delivered in house." As you recognise in your report, members of the staff team in both the University and college are working hard to ensure a consistently good student experience across the programme and we have been encouraged by very marked improvement in feedback from students compared with previous years of the programme. You also note that opportunities for further development will naturally arise from 2013 onwards when the programme will be taught entirely by the LLC. We have already begun to work towards this and will welcome your feedback on our proposals as they take shape.

Assessment Processes: You note that you were not able to review all exam scripts in draft form and observe some variation in the annotation and marking of scripts.

We shall look to achieve greater consistency and improved practice in both of these matters during the course of the year.

Moving beyond our Foundation Year programmes, please find enclosed a summary of feedback from our other External Examiners. As you will see, your positive evaluation of the quality of our learning and teaching, feedback and student support is shared across Externals for all of our programmes. Where points have been raised for further development, these are not only being addressed within the relevant programme but will also be taken account of, wherever appropriate, across the Centre's provision as a whole.

Feedback from our students through the NSS and the University's own Programme Survey, which covers those in other years of study, continues to give a positive picture. NSS scores for 2010-11 were an exception to this but were based on a very small and flawed sample of respondents. We are pleased to see that rectifying this technical problem for 2011-12 has elicited feedback that is consistent with previous years for the NSS and all years of the Programme Survey. Please find enclosed a copy of our Action Plan which summarises feedback from students, along with some of the key points from External Examiners, and identifies our main areas for further work in the current year.

I should like to close by thanking you for all the work that you have undertaken during your first year as our External Examiner for Foundation Year programmes. We appreciate the breadth of experience that you bring to this role and the care with which you have reviewed students' work and given us feedback. I know that <>, <> and <> have particularly valued their conversations with you and your thoughtful and constructive engagement with the ongoing development of our programmes.

Yours sincerely,

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Director for Lifelong Learning/Head of Centre