

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:	Continuing Education
Subject(s):	Education/Learning Support
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Cert HE Learning and Teaching FD Learning and Teaching BA (Hons) Learning and Teaching
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	Cert HE Foundation Degree B.A. (Hons)

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

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.

The intended learning outcomes for the programme are compatible with those with which I am familiar on other programmes in other institutions and the standards are appropriate for the award.

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.*

Yes

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.*

In three samples provided for me at the end of semesters one and two I have had opportunity to see a substantial number of scripts with associated feedback from internal examiners. I have commented on each of these in detail (see comments box at end of this pro-forma) Once again, I can confirm that the design and structure of the assessment methods is a strength of the programmes and shows good variety from presentations, reports, blogs, essays and group work.

The student performance suggests that excellent standards of teaching and learning are in operation.

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.*

Student work is compatible with others at the same level in other institutions with which I am familiar. The quality of feedback is almost always high (see attached sheet for more detail) and students are given clear targets to improve. The target setting on most modular feedback is a real strength of the programme. The moderation process works well and was in evidence within the samples.

Year 1 students struggle with academic writing which is to be expected with students on a programme of this nature; what is pleasing is that they show a marked improvement in this respect as they continue through the programme.

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.

I would, once again, commend the team on the variety of assessments and the quality of feedback. It was evident that the wider range of assessment tasks (presentations, group work, handbook design, essays, blogs and reports) allows students to 'play to their strengths' and provides excellent opportunities to link practice to theory.

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.

All of the assignments demand some level of research by the students and this is especially true at level 3. At all levels action research from practice is encouraged which leads to the development of good transferable skills for students.

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

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.*

The material was sufficient and it was especially useful to have semester one work sent by post in February so that it could be examined in more detail over the winter prior to the visit. This then allowed more time during the visit to look at work from semester two.

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.*

All appropriate documentation was sent

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?

See above - it was very useful to receive the semester one work in February

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?

Sufficient assessed work was made available to feel confident that my evaluation in respect of standards was based on sound evidence.

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

The choice of subjects for the final research project (dissertation) was appropriate and the standard of assessment was excellent (see section "other comments" below for more detail).

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?

All administrative arrangements were excellent

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

These issues were identified at the Examination Board.

Other comments

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

Detailed comments about the samples seen:

Semester 1 work:

Module LLLC1309 Work based learning 1 Assignment 2 (Learning Contract)

This was an interesting batch of assignments with a cluster of marks – no very high marks and few fails. This was almost certainly due to the nature of the assignment which doesn't provide opportunity for much

in the way of demonstrating higher level skills. This is not a criticism as the assignment gives students a very firm foundation to flourish in the later assignment.

I agree with all the marks and commend the on-script marking which is detailed and thorough. Students who take note of the comments will be very well supported when they attempt the major assignment for this module.

Module LLLC 1376 Analysis of a learning journey

These assignments provided some fascinating insights to the range of students' experiences prior to coming to university. <> assignment was particularly good. The feedback was fair and accurate and I agree with all the marks awarded.

Module LLLC 2226 Work based learning 2 Assignment 1(Learning Contract)

Some really excellent on-script feedback in evidence, with clear direction for students. There is an interesting range of projects proposed and I look forward to reading them in due course. All marks agreed.

Module LLLC 2246 Teaching Skills for Support Staff Assignment 1

These were interesting assignments and in general feedback was clear and helpful. Work by <> was especially good. I did feel that the assignment by <> was so poor that <> probably needed much more guidance on the feedback sheet. I fully agree with the mark and with the marker's comments, but the student has so clearly misunderstood the whole nature of what <> needed to do that I feel that the three bullet points at the end of the feedback will not be sufficient to allow <> to succeed on resubmission. All the other assignments were accurately assessed and I agree with all the marker's comments and grades.

Module LLLC 2228 Using Stories Assignment 1

Some fascinating assignments which demonstrate, in several cases, an excellent choice of underpinning reading. The feedback given is excellent – especially to the weakest candidates and should help them to improve. I agree with all the marks and the feedback commentary.

Module LLLC2223 Application of Counselling Assignment 1

There is some really excellent work on display in these assignments and particularly impressive links between practice and theory. The reflective elements show great maturity from the majority of students. I would have like to see more on-script correction of errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation (in line with other modules) but overall the feedback seems very clear and I agree with all the marks.

Module LLLC3948 Assignment 1

This assignment has clearly been a challenge for some students but the work produced is good in most cases. The feedback is outstandingly good and I agree with all the comments and the marks awarded.

Module LLLC2246 Assignment 2 Micro-teaching and Portfolio

This is an intriguing module of which to be the External Examiner as one has to imagine the micro-teaching happening from the feedback and the resources. Consequently I am at a disadvantage to some degree in making a judgement. I can say, however, that the feedback on the overall feedback sheet is detailed, helpful and reflects exactly what is in the assignment. In addition the on-script marking was thorough, detailed and extremely useful for the students in helping them to see how to avoid errors in the future. I am therefore happy to agree all the marks.

Module LLLC1309 Work Based Learning 1

There is some interesting work in this sample with students clearly engaged with their investigations. There is a tendency for them to get bogged down with a lot of description, rather than focusing on analysis and evaluation but this is identified by the markers and reflected in the marks awarded. Some very good annotation on script and clear feedback. All grades agreed.

Module LLLC1376 Skills and Processes of Learning Assignments 2 and 3

Both assignments showed a wide range of marks with some students performing very well and some doing particularly badly. Academic writing, citation and basic grammar/punctuation are clearly difficult issues for some students. The on-script annotation is excellent and the feedback identifies very clearly where students need to improve. All grades agreed.

Module LLLC2233 Application of Counselling

This is not my specialist area and I find myself continually drawn into the case study material which the students produce so that it is difficult to be objective. As someone who rarely marks such intimate personal work I find it quite difficult to assess the feedback and marks but they certainly seem to reflect very helpful commentary and I am able to verify that the spread of marks is consistent with what I would expect to find. The on-script marking for this assignment is adequate but much less rigorous than on other modules which I have seen; especially in relation to grammar, spelling and punctuation. There may be good reason for this but perhaps the team might like to discuss how to ensure that it doesn't give the message to students that these errors are acceptable in some subjects.

Module LLLC3946 Research project

These three assignments were a delight to read. Excellent student work, good clear feedback both on-script and on the feedback sheets and I agree with all the marks awarded.

Module LLLC3948 Issues in Professional Practice

An interesting set of assignments which students had clearly enjoyed doing. The posters are good and the students have made some interesting choices. The marking and grades awarded are exactly in line with the standards which I would expect to see.

Semester 2

Module LLLC3949 Extended Research Project

This sample provided examples of excellent student work and very good feedback. I agree with all the marks awarded. The topics were varied and interesting and in some cases quite surprising (e.g. the examination of Capital Trains training). There is a tendency for students - even those with good academic writing skills - to use inappropriate adjectives and adverbs at times with words such as 'massive' and 'vast' being interjected at regular intervals. This is perhaps something to discourage. Overall, a very good sample and some excellent work in evidence.

Module LLLC3952 Researching the Sector

Two different batches of assignments made up this sample, one which focused on a project proposal and one which focused on a critique of a piece of research. The proposals showed a considerable range in their focus which was excellent as it demonstrated that students had developed transferable skills over their time at university and could begin to apply them in diverse ways. The on-script feedback was good, clear and detailed. The feedback sheets provided clear guidance and justified the marks awarded. I agree with all the marks seen.

The second set of assignments for this module were the ones which demanded students to critique a piece of research. I was surprised to find that the 'piece of research' had clearly been provided to students (although one person in the sample had looked at a different project) and wondered why the students had not been allowed to critique a paper that related to their own topic? In general the students had tackled the task very well and it seems a bit of a pity that the subject matter could not then be used by them in their own project. This is an observation and is not a criticism as the students had clearly gained much learning from the assignment and I agree with all the comments and grades awarded.

Module LLLC 1369 Introduction to Childhood and Child Development

Two sets of samples were made available - one the results of a multiple choice test and one an assignment analysing a film. The test results suggest that students have gained a good grasp of theory in relation to childhood and child development but the film analyses are, on the whole, very weak which suggests that the students have difficulty in applying the theory to practice. Feedback on the written assignments is good in the main, especially the on-script feedback, although not as extensive as in other modules seen. One issue which is not corrected on any script is the use of colloquial terminology for relatives - mum, dad, grandma - and it would perhaps be wise to eradicate this at this early stage in the degree rather than having to address it later.

Overall I agree with all the marks awarded.

Module LLLC 1311 Basic Approaches to Managing and Resolving Conflict

These blogs are very interesting and extremely revealing about the students' own abilities to deal with conflict. The feedback is very variable; in some cases it is good but on other scripts it is insufficient to allow the students to know how to improve. In these cases, errors of presentation and lack of depth in analysis are not highlighted which could cause problems for weaker students. I appreciate that these are personal accounts but major presentational errors (such as describing TOIL as Time Off in Loo!) should have been corrected. I agree with all the marks awarded but feel that in some cases the feedback could have been more detailed.

Module LLLC 2201 Contemporary Issues in Learning

These samples, relating to two different assignments, provided a few examples of very good student work alongside some where they had clearly been very challenged by the tasks. The feedback is excellent and is especially good for the weaker students in identifying how they can improve. All grades and comments agreed.

Module LLLC 2202 Curriculum and Assessment

This assignment is a group presentation. Unfortunately time has not permitted the opportunity to view the presentations (but thank you for the offer to see them) The associated paperwork does give a fair picture of what has been involved in the work and the feedback is extremely good with lots of clear detail as to how marks have been gained or lost and how students can improve. Students have gained good marks for their presentations and I fully agree with all the marks awarded.

Module LLLC 3945 Introduction to Autism

Two assignments were made available for external examination, an essay and a Handbook. In both cases the feedback was clear, detailed and supportive. I agree with all the marks awarded. The handbooks had obviously provided an assessment opportunity which students had relished and it was good to see an alternative way of assessing student performance.

Module LLLC 3942 Leadership for Learning

Two assignments were presented in this sample, a literature review and case study. The range of marks accurately reflected the range of student work in evidence and all the marks were appropriate. The feedback, both on-script and on the main feedback sheets, was very clear, detailed and helpful.

Module LLLC 2231 S.E.N. and Inclusion

This sample had student work from two assignments, a group presentation with briefing paper and an essay.

The briefing papers contained exercises, scripts for the presentation and powerpoint slides so gave a very good picture of the actual presentations. The students had clearly found the topic fascinating and some excellent work was in evidence. The marks awarded and feedback commentary is all agreed.

The essays were of a high standard although students had gained better marks on the presentations. The feedback on the essays is excellent - very clear and very detailed. I fully agree with all the comments and the grades awarded.

Module LLLC 2226 Work-based Learning 2

As time was limited I only examined a few of these samples of work but they appear to be very well marked with good feedback, clear targets and accurate marks awarded.

<>

25th November 2013

Dear <>,

External Examiner's Report for 2012-13

As usual at this time of year, we have been reflecting carefully on the feedback that we receive from our External Examiners and from student surveys. In the light of this, I am now writing to each of our examiners to respond to the observations that you make in your report and to give you a broader sense of our plans for 2013-14.

I should like to begin by thanking you for your work during the year as the External Examiner for our Learning and Teaching 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. In particular, the additional notes that you submit to us on individual scripts provide us with a level of fine-grained feedback on our handling of assessments that I know is greatly valued by <> and <> Programme Team.

We are pleased to see that your overall impression of our Learning and Teaching provision remains as positive as in previous years. You continue to find the programmes to be comparable to those in other institutions, taught to appropriate standards and assessed with fairness and rigour. You identify the design, variety and structure of assessment methods as particularly positive features and welcome the opportunities that are provided for students to play to their own strengths and to link practice and theory. You also commend the generally high quality of feedback and the practice of target-setting to help students to develop as they work towards further assignments. Your observation that "student performance suggests that excellent standards of teaching and learning are in operation" is a great encouragement.

In your verbal report at the Examination Board, you drew attention to occasional instances where feedback is less thorough than is customary across the programme area. This has been discussed carefully within the Programme Team and we are working towards consistency of good practice in the coming year within the context of the Centre-wide changes to assessment feedback noted below. Beyond this, the challenges for the coming year are, as ever, to maintain the high quality of our provision and ensure that students continue to be well served.

Looking more broadly, I enclose for your information a summary of feedback from our other External Examiners. As you will see, your positive evaluation of our learning and teaching, feedback and support for students is shared across the range of examiners. Where points have been raised for further development, these are not only being addressed within the relevant programme but are also implemented, wherever appropriate, across our provision as a whole.

Feedback from students through the NSS and the University's Programme Survey continues to show a very positive picture. We are particularly pleased to note steady improvement in satisfaction scores in virtually all areas for both surveys and, with it, the suggestion that high overall satisfaction is well grounded in students' experience across all aspects of their learning. Please find enclosed a copy of our action plan for 2013-14 which summarises this feedback and sets out the key developments that we are looking to take forward in the current year.

You will see that one such development is the introduction of newly formulated assessment criteria and feedback forms. We have developed these in careful consultation with staff and students and following a short trial that involved blind re-marking of a sample of assignments that had already been processed through our exam boards. We hope that the new approach will be more accessible for students and provide them with a clearer sense of what is being sought from them and how they are being graded. Please find details of the scheme enclosed along with the explanatory notes that have been published to students and staff. Naturally, we shall be reflecting carefully on how this works out in practice and would welcome any feedback that you can offer as an External Examiner. If you have observations during the course of the year ahead of your annual report do please raise them with <> or contact our Director of Student Education, <>, via <> or <>.

Thank you, once again, for your work on our behalf as External Examiner. It is invaluable to have such thorough and constructive feedback and we look forward to your continuing association with the LLC in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely,

<>
Director for Lifelong Learning,
<>