

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: | Lifelong Learning Centre |
| Subject(s): | <i>All modules</i> |
| Programme(s) / Module(s): | <i>Dip HE Business Management</i> |
| Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc): | Diploma of Higher Education |

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

There are no matters of 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?

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

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.*

I had access to the learning outcomes for all modules and can confirm that they are appropriate for this award. The programme is well structured and the content is relevant to the current business environment. The standards of the programme are appropriate for HE Diploma level.

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.*

I have managed similar programmes, some institute specific Foundation Degrees and other nationally accredited HND/C's, and the content and assessment of this programme is of a similar standard.

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.*

A wide range of assessment methods have been used on the programme. There are some excellent examples of case studies based on current national and regional business issues. All examination questions were appropriate and allowed students to demonstrate both depth and breadth of knowledge across the full mark range. The assessment methods take into account the wide range of knowledge/skills of students entering such a programme and allow them to develop ideas and concepts that are in keeping with their current level of understanding but also allow for students to "stretch" themselves into a deeper level of understanding.

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.*

As stated above this programme attracts students with a wide range of knowledge and skills. The quality of work presented by them is of the desired standard of this level of qualification. There are clearly some very able students who have adapted to this type of study and assessment with little difficulty. There are also other students who have some difficulties either through being out of education for some time or through language difficulties. In these cases it is clear that the programme team is offering support and guidance to allow them to develop to their full potential.

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.

There have been no significant changes to the programme since my previous visit however I was informed of some changes that are being made for 2012/13 which include introducing a module of Ethics/Corporate Governance to the programme which I feel is a positive step forward as it will address many of the current issues relating to conduct of business in the UK and demonstrates the teams commitment to making the programme interesting, relevant and challenging to the students.

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.

See above comments on curriculum development

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.*

All necessary documents are readily available and communication with the programme team was very efficient. Any requests for information or clarification were dealt with speedily and effectively.

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 programme documentation was made available. At the time of my visit module boxes were provided which contained programme specifications, assessment materials, marking criteria, grade lists and sample student work with evidence of the internal verification process. In addition samples of work were sent to me at the end of semester one for moderation.

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?

All assignments were of an appropriate level but not all were provided in draft form. A discussion was had with the programme team about all aspects of the assessment process and the methods of assessment being used.

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?

A good range of assessed work was provided for all modules with samples of work from top, bottom and middle of the marking range. There were some excellent examples of feedback to students with additional comments on the scripts but more consistency across the modules would assist the students in their development.

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?

Support from both academic and administrative staff was excellent. The team contacted me in well in advance of my visit and were very flexible in arranging the Board of Examiners around my requirements. I was happy to support all the board recommendations.

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

All decisions about mitigating circumstances were clearly explained and evidence was included in the documentation presented to the board. Careful consideration of individual student's circumstances was evident from the comments made by staff during the discussions.

Other comments

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

I am very pleased with the content and delivery of this programme. There is ample evidence that there is a dedicated and committed team working to develop this programme and to encourage widening participation in higher education. I am pleased to see that my comments from last year were mainly acted upon in that the subject matter of assignments was broadened. However I still feel that too much emphasis is placed upon the retail sector when it comes to case studies. Having said that I also accept that the case studies used were both current and relevant to the module specifications. I consider the replacement of the Customer Relations module with a module of business ethics to be a positive development and will allow discussion of broader issues of management behaviour and standards to be incorporated into the syllabus. I feel that the HRM and Managing People modules need to be revisited in terms of where they are timetabled and how they are assessed as the Managing People assessment would appear to be assessing issues (change management) that would be more appropriate for the higher level module. The only major inconsistency in the programme is in terms of referencing where final year students seem to perform at a lower standard than the level below. This may be indicative of a greater emphasis now being placed on the need for good referencing early in the programme but may need reinforcing at the beginning of every academic year.

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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 see that your overall impression of our Business Management provision remains positive and that you find the programme to be well designed and taught to appropriate standards. It is encouraging to note your observations on our "wide range" of assessment methods which you see as enabling "students to demonstrate both depth and breadth of knowledge across the full mark range" allowing them "to 'stretch' themselves into a deeper level of understanding". We also note your commendation of the programme team for the developmental support that they provide to students and their introduction of a new core module in Business Ethics which, "demonstrates the team's commitment to making the programme interesting, relevant and challenging to the students". Finally, we are glad to find that you judge our assessment and examination processes to be well managed with appropriate engagement with you as External Examiner.

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

Consistency of feedback to students: Whilst you commend "some excellent examples of feedback" you suggest that it would be beneficial to have a more consistent approach across all modules. <> is addressing this with <> team and will check progress through moderation meetings.

Range of Case Studies: In your report last year you encouraged us to broaden the range of examples and reference points used on the programme. This year you note progress but suggest that case studies may still give too much emphasis to the retail sector. We shall continue to address this point and seek to extend the contexts in which learning is grounded in experience.

LLLC1344 Managing People and LLLC2241 Managing HR: You observe that some assessments for LLLC1344 seem to be addressing issues that would be more appropriate at level 2 and invite us to consider this in the scheduling and

assessment of these two modules. We are looking to address this issue through more careful mapping of assignment tasks across both modules in order to ensure that each is assessed at the correct level with appropriate progression from one to the other.

Referencing: You note that final year students show less skill in referencing than those in earlier years, possibly as a result of improved attention to this in more recent new cohorts, and suggest that there is need to reinforce use of Harvard referencing at the beginning of each year. This proposal has been implemented.

Moving beyond Business Management, 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. As you may recall from my letter last year, NSS scores for 2010-11 were based on a very small and flawed sample of respondents and 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 the year as our External Examiner for Business Management. 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 <> team have valued the contact that they have had with you and appreciate your thoughtful and constructive observations.

Yours sincerely,

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Director for Lifelong Learning/Head of Centre