

## 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:	Lifelong Learning Centre
Subject(s):	Business Management
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Dip HE Business Management Business Studies Foundation Year
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	Dip HE, BA

##### 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](mailto: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?*

##### **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.*

It is clear that in all modules the intended learning outcomes were commensurate with standards expected of a Dip HE and Foundation year

**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.*

**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 variety of assessment methods have been employed with clear instructions to students as to what was required of them. The marking schemes were clear and were applied in a fair manner. The range of achievements of students is what would be expected of an intake of this kind. Foundation year progression is very good and from my experience exceeds that of similar programmes in other 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.*

As these programmes recruit widening participation cohorts the range of ability and achievement is very significant but that is what would be expected in such a diverse student body. The style of questioning and variety of assessment styles used gave the different types of students the best possible opportunity to achieve success.

**5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum**

**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.*

The addition of a model on business ethics has certainly widened the scope of the programme. It has also given students the opportunity to look at the "bigger picture" of business in society and apply their knowledge of current affairs to the learning processes. The resulting student work is of a very high standard and demonstrates to me that the students have enthusiastically engaged with this module.

**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.*

## 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 documentation was received in a timely manner and there were no issues that required further clarification.

**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 relevant documentation was available when I made my visit. Samples of semester one student work were sent in the post along with all relevant documentation.

**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 received draft exam papers by email and any comments I made were promptly acted upon by the module leaders. I consider all the papers received were of an appropriate standard. I found the teaching team to be very open to all suggestions and consider them to be extremely professional in all their communications with me – they are clearly a group who work well together.

**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?**

An adequate number of moderated assignments and examinations were made available for me to consider. All assignment scripts were annotated and good feedback was given on the standard grading sheets. Some examination marks were difficult to follow as in some cases the same colour ink was used by the marker and the student but this was a minor issue as on most papers it was clear where marks had been allocated.

**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 examination board was very professionally and efficiently managed. I attended the meeting and agreed with all the recommendations of the board.

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

Decisions about mitigation were clearly shown on the grading sheets and where there were questions raised a clear explanation was provided by the programme leader.

**Other comments**

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

This is the third year I have acted as external examiner for this programme and in each year I can see that there have been qualitative improvements to the programme. The team should be commended for their efforts and commitment to the programme and its students.

There are a number of positive points that I would like to raise;

1 The use of case studies in assignments – the cases used were generally current, relevant and local. I feel that this approach encourages students to engage more readily with the subject matter and this can be evidenced through the quality of some of the work produced.

2 In every module the quality of feedback to the students was very good and tutors annotated scripts to demonstrate where marks had been allocated and also added helpful comments for the students.

3 The quality of referencing has improved markedly but there still seems to be some confusion between references and

bibliographies.

4 In the extended project and work-base project a vast range of issues were covered allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate their application of skills/knowledge accumulated through all the other modules.

5 As mentioned before, the introduction of a module of ethics is a major positive development for the programme. It again allows students to demonstrate an understanding of the business world and the impacts of business on society as a whole.

The only criticisms I can make are of a minor nature;

1 Many assignments start without a proper introduction.

2. In the finance module where students had to produce financial documents and written explanations the numerical side was often good the explanation not so.

3 Two different modules used the same organisation in case studies – more variety would help.

My overall opinion of the programme is that it is improving steadily and the retention and achievement data clearly shows a high level of student engagement and is a testament to the commitment and skills of the academic team.

<>

25<sup>th</sup> 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.

Thank you for your report and for all of your work during the year as the External Examiner for our Business programmes. We particularly appreciate the way in which you have picked up additional responsibility for our new, full-time Foundation Year and welcome the continuity which comes from your oversight of our whole provision in Business Management. I know that <> and <> team continue to value their contact with you and appreciate your well-informed and constructive observations.

It is good to read that your overall impression, in your third year as our External Examiner, is that the Diploma Programme is "improving steadily" and that "retention and achievement data clearly shows a high level of student engagement and is a testament to the commitment and skills of the academic team". We are pleased, too, that your initial impressions of the Foundation Year have been positive and that, in your view, "progression is very good and from my experience exceeds that of similar programmes in other institutions." Turning to your more detailed comments, you find that learning outcomes and standards are appropriate and marking systems clear and fairly applied. The wide variety of assessment methods which "gives different types of student the best possible opportunity to achieve success" is commended as is the clarity of the instructions provided to students when assignments are set and the high quality of feedback which they receive on completed work. You also welcome the introduction of an ethics module to the Diploma programme as "a major positive development" and commend the range of issues explored by students in their extended projects.

In relation to points which you identify for further development, we shall continue to work with students to strengthen their skills in academic writing and encourage them to frame proper introductions to assignments. We shall also look to strengthen students' work in the written commentary elements of finance assignments. As for your comment on the importance of variety in case studies, this is something that we shall continue to pursue although, as it happens, the particular repetition that you cite

would not impact on students since it occurs between modules on the Foundation Year and Diploma that are for completely different cohorts.

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,  
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