

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:	Foundation Degree in Professional Studies in Family support BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies
Subject(s):	<i>See below</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Module: LLLC1083 - the development of Child Welfare Module: Child welfare research policy and practice Module: Managing the external Environment Module: management and leadership Module: Academic skills in family support Module: Safeguarding Children Module: Child and family Health module Module: Violent and sexual offending young people Module: Child Welfare in Early Years Module: Advanced work based learning in family support 2210
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies

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?

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

This is my first year as external examiner to this programme and I very impressed with the work of the students and staff alike. The programme at both foundation and BA (Hons) levels present as an important applied practice programme with strong relevance to workers in the field of family support. It is designed to meet the needs of 'return learners' and 'latecomers' to education and the programme is orientated to fit in with those wishing to complete the programme on a part-time study basis. Importantly, students use their 'in work' experiences in the field to test out academic learning on the programme. It is obvious that the success of the programme in part hinges on the commitment of the course director and associate director both of whom deserve commendation. In sum, the programme meets a tangible niche in the market of applied social science with specific emphasis on the study of family support methods.

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 content of the curriculum of the programme is rich and fit for purpose in terms of an applied course of this nature and the specific needs of the target student population. The learning outcomes set for student are appropriate and fair, given the academic qualification on offer. In terms of the governance of the work of students, the marking and moderation system is excellent – feedback to students respectful, constructive fair and (hopefully) helpful. There is strong evidence that both the marking sheets feedback and moderating descriptors are being utilized.

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 programme meets national standards and having reviewed similar education programmes elsewhere in the UK and internationally, I am very happy that the programme is of the required standard in every respect

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 very fair and marking with extensive comments provided to students as well as robust moderation mechanisms is most impressive.

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.*

Overall ,the academic standards of students work is commendable, particularly given the rich content of knowledge and practice experience that students bring to the programme. Having said this, some issues of presentation of written work by some students presents as an on-going challenge. The course team are very proactive in addressing this issue.

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

Given that students utilise their work contexts as practice placement, there is no clinical practice component relevant to the programme on offer.

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.

Some consideration of consolidating theoretical underpinnings in family support might be a useful addition to the programme. For example, greater inclusion of social ecology theory, social capital, social support and resilience as composite to family support practice might bring some added value

to curriculum.

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.

There is evidence that current research is being utilised by students in their written work and in the teaching content provided by lecturers. Similarly, the action research dissertations undertaken by students are of high quality and provide a current relevance to the field of scrutiny.

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

Not applicable

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

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?

Yes

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

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

Yes

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

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

Yes

Other comments

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

Congratulations and well done to students on your achievements; and to the full staff team well done on delivering an excellent and much needed programme in a challenging environment and pressurised time schedule.

<>

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 very pleased to find that you have formed such a positive impression of our Child and Family Studies provision in your first year as External Examiner. We are encouraged by your recognition of its significance as, "an applied practice programme with strong relevance to workers in the field of family support" and your praise for the impressive work of students and staff. More particularly, we note that you judge the standards of the programme to be appropriate and commend the curriculum as "rich and fit for purpose" with evidence of students engaging with current research in their assignments and effectively pursuing an inquiry of their own in the dissertation module. We also note your endorsement of our approach to assessment, marking and moderation and your view that feedback to students is "respectful, constructive, fair and (hopefully) helpful".

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

Students' written work: Whilst you commend the overall academic standards of students' work and the "rich content of knowledge and practice experience" that it embodies, you also note that "some issues of presentation of written work by some students presents as an ongoing challenge." As you would expect, members of the programme team are very alive to this challenge in a field where we deliberately seek to widen participation in higher education. <> and <> colleagues will continue to be proactive in building the academic skills of students through each level of the programme and to give particular attention to students for whom this represents a steeper learning curve.

Consolidation of theoretical learning: You suggest that we consider more consolidation of the theoretical underpinnings of family support and note that the curriculum might be enriched through "greater inclusion of social ecology theory, social capital, social support and resilience as composite to family support practice".

This proposal is welcomed by the Programme Team and is consistent with changes that have already been made in a radical overhaul of curriculum that is being implemented from 2012-13 onwards and gives more systematic attention to matters of theory and practice. As we reflect on the delivery of this new curriculum in its first year, we shall be mindful of your points on theoretical learning and will welcome further feedback on how well you see this working out.

Moving beyond Child and Family Studies, 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 Child and Family Studies. We appreciate the wealth of experience that you bring to this role and the rigour with which you have reviewed students' work and given us feedback. I know that <> and <> team have particularly valued their conversations with you and your lively and thoughtful engagement with the ongoing development of the programme to the benefit of those working in the field.

Yours sincerely,

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Director for Lifelong Learning/Head of Centre