

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:	Healthcare
Subject(s):	Psychotherapy and Counselling
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Psychotherapy and Counselling
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MA

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 programme's aims and intended learning outcomes are entirely consistent with the level of award. Additionally, as a course accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the aims and ILOs are consistent for an accredited academic programme that additionally serves as a professional training.

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.*

As stated in (1) above, the programme has been accredited by BACP and has therefore, by definition, met exacting professional national standards. The programme compares very favourably with courses at similar institutions and has maintained its reputation for excellence in teaching, research and student support within the field.

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 programme makes use of a range of assessment mechanisms to determine acquisition, assimilation and application of knowledge and skill. Assessment approaches are linked well to ILOs. I have been given plenty of opportunity to have sight of student work, which provides good evidence of high quality teaching and learning.

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 work examined provided good evidence of students demonstrating their achievement against the stated aims and ILOs. I have examined at other institutions and the standard of work on the MA at Leeds is high. Work is typically clearly expressed, well-structured, academically sound and well referenced. This is not always the case on similar courses and, as such, the course at Leeds compares very favourably.

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

The course prides itself on a commitment to the highest possible standards of professional and ethical practice. As such, assessment of such components is both rigorous and fair. I have had opportunity to sample a number of aspects of assessment, including transcripts, audio recordings, video sessions, supervisor reports and placement reports – all of which have been compiled to a high standard and, where necessary and appropriate, suitably challenged.

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.

This is an evolving course delivered by a dynamic and engaged course team. I have been in regular contact with course tutors to discuss particular aspects of course delivery, have responded where there have been student concerns, as well as working with the team on wider, but related, activities (including supporting publishing their research and supporting their authoring of a book chapter). This has further enhanced the reputation of the programme and their learning has been 're-invested' into the student experience.

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.

Research is strongly embedded throughout the course curriculum, learning and teaching. Students are encouraged to actively engage with research evidence, to critically reflect on it, as well as to fully engage with their own research process. Additionally, students are further encouraged to disseminate their own research findings through publications in journals and to present to their peers on research days.

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

I have been linked with a new External Examiner to offer mentoring support to <>, and have been in email contact. <> has required little support as yet, but we have put mechanisms in place to monitor this and respond accordingly.

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, I have been happy with the information provided.

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, I have received all material as and when needed and have received any additional material as it was requested by me.

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 have had sight of all assessment processes through the academic year and feel confident in their suitability and standard.

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, plenty of work has been sent through in a timely manner for me to view thoroughly, thus placing me in a good position to make informed comment.

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

Yes. There is a very heavy emphasis on the qualitative methods of investigation, which reflects the strengths and interests of the course team as well as a wider national profile. However, students might additionally benefit from encouragement into other research methods, such as systematic reviews and case study design, as well as the benefits of quantitative approaches and mixed-method design. This would further enhance the research profile at Leeds for this programme.

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 meeting I am scheduled to attend takes place in November 2013. I have been given sufficient information about this meeting and it is my intention to attend.

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

Unable to comment at this stage.

Other comments

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

I continue to enjoy my term as external examiner for this excellent programme, in working with the tutor team and the students, and feel proud to be associated with it. As counselling and psychotherapy training continues to develop in the UK, following the introduction of voluntary practice registers, it is beholden on institutions with the prestige of the likes of Leeds University to continue to support such programmes. It is my hope that the University will continue to be a strong advocate for the development of the counselling and psychotherapy profession in the UK through the delivery of such excellent programmes.

School of Healthcare

Baines Wing
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Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

24 January 2014

Dear

Re External Examiner's Report 2012-2013 - MA Psychotherapy and Counselling

I should like on behalf of the programme team to thank you for your continued support to the MA Psychotherapy and Counselling programme.

The team is pleased to see that you feel the programme has 'maintained its reputation for excellence in teaching, research and student support within the field.' It is especially encouraging to know that you feel our programme compares favourably to similar programmes in other institutions.

Your positive comments relating to research-led learning and teaching are heartening and the team notes your suggestion that students should be "encouraged to disseminate their own research through publication" and your observation that 'there is a very heavy emphasis on the qualitative methods of investigation'. It is true that most of the students have chosen to use qualitative methods, though in previous years some students have made use of survey methods with statistical analysis. Many of the students feel that qualitative methods, whether phenomenological, heuristic or autoethnographic, fit best with their axiologies and epistemological/ontological stance. However, it should be noted that the School does offer students the opportunity to select a research topic and/or methodological approach from a catalogue of staff interests (potential supervisors). Students therefore have the option to choose a supervisor from outwith the counselling and psychotherapy team. One of the counselling and psychotherapy team has for some years offered systematic review methods within the catalogue, with no take-up as yet. This may change, as two of the staff members are engaged in pedagogic research incorporating systematic review, for which they are employing a current second year student as research assistant. Additionally, fifty per cent of the current second years come from science, technology, engineering or maths backgrounds and the programme leader is actively encouraging this group to consider using quantitative or mixed methods designs while maintaining high levels of reflexivity. It remains to be seen whether this suggestion will be taken up. The team has experience of case study research and the programme leader took the lead on writing ethical guidelines for case study and autoethnographic research within the School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee. The team would be happy to discuss this issue with you when you next visit the School.

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24 January 2014

It is very gratifying to know that you continue to enjoy your role as external examiner. I should like to thank you for your generous mentoring of a new external examiner within the School, this is very much appreciated.

The team is deeply grateful for your contribution to its on-going efforts towards international excellence in counselling and psychotherapy education.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely