

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):	Social Work
Programme(s) / Module(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 modules at BA. Some modules comprise two assignments • 1 module plus dissertations at MA
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA and 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

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.*

- These are entirely appropriate for both MA and BA programmes. I think good programme design is a key strength in these programmes, ensuring students are fully equipped to meet demanding professional standards when qualified. The programme is comprehensive, giving full attention to areas with some other comparable programmes do not cover
- Standards are high across all modules and provision of practice learning opportunities is commendable

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 the current subject benchmarking and is easily comparable to similar HEIs. It is significantly better than provision in some post '92 HEIs
- As students will need to meet the requirements of the 'Professional Capabilities Framework' for Social Work some changes will need to be made to assessment of practice in due course but the taught element of the course will easily equip students to meet these requirements

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.*

- As in my comments last year, there is a strong reliance on essays as a form of assessment. I think it would be helpful if consideration could be given to other forms of assessment both to provide different means of assessing students and to reduce the risk of plagiarism which is much easier in essays. I have expressed particular concerns in relation to Module HECS 1082 (Human growth, behaviour and development) where I think there is a lot of similarity between assignments and this may not sufficiently stretch students. Marking and moderating are rigorous and fair as is the conduct of Exam Boards
- The assignments I have seen evidence good quality of teaching. Comments given to students are helpful and constructive. As indicated above, placements provide extremely good learning opportunities for students and work completed during/after placement indicates very good preparation for placement and also good teaching across the whole programme. Importantly, students are encouraged to use research in their work and not to rely solely on textbooks

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 in point 2, standards are easily comparable and entirely appropriate both at BA and MA levels. The BA cohort's work at the outset showed some of the common weaknesses of students entering HEI in terms of poor study skills but they are given very helpful feedback and signposted to appropriate support. There has been some excellent work from stronger students at both BA and MA level and it is important to note that there was some publishable work among the MA dissertations
- Weaker students, particularly at BA level, tend to make more use of basic textbooks and, in some instances, need to move on from these but, overall, students read widely and apply their reading in a reflective, critical and analytical way, particularly the stronger students. Poor English and, in particular, lack of proof-reading is letting weaker students down and even some of the stronger students have some difficulties in these respects

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

I have seen practice-related assignments and also portfolios, both at BA level and, as above, the work seen evidences very good placement provision. With cut backs in both Local Authority and voluntary sector provision it is becoming very difficult to secure and retain good placements and so the course is making very good provision in this respect

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.

- Quality of placement provision, preparation for placement and practice education
- Research mindedness
- Helpful and rigorous marking
- Very good standard of teaching from people with good subject knowledge

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.

- MA dissertations seen were generally of a good quality and showed good skills in using literature to interrogate data. The stronger work was critical and analytical and all work evidenced hard work and a studious approach. In comparison to other HEIs, I think students could be encouraged to make closer links between their chosen subjects and implications for current social work practice
- It was encouraging to see that, this year, more students were using findings from participatory research in their work
- The BA Research Project HECS 3211) is an excellent assignment, enabling students to link research findings to their practice in an analytical way. Again there was publishable work here and an assignment like this is an excellent training in research awareness which stands students in very good stead for when they qualify
- The stronger students at BA and MA levels use research literature in their work

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

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.*

No problems in this respect and staff always answer any queries promptly

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.*

It would be very helpful to receive programme handbooks

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?

It would be helpful to see assignment questions but these can usually be gleaned from students' scripts

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?

Samples were adequate apart from one module where there had been a number of late submissions due to extensions and a change in admin staff meant I did not receive the whole sample. Scripts are clearly marked

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

Choices were entirely appropriate but please see my comments at 7, above, regarding links to current practice

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?

- Arrangements were generally satisfactory but there were a couple of glitches when material was posted to me at home instead of via DHL. These were rectified.
- I would welcome more turn-around time for some modules as this is sometimes very tight, leaving me with little time to read and report
- I was extremely grateful to all the staff who were involved in ensuring I could receive paper scripts, instead of

accessing online marking. Health-related difficulties would have made that very difficult for me and so this was very helpful indeed

- I have attended an Exam Board and been very satisfied with the process of this. From everything I have seen to date I am confident that any difficult decisions will be reached in a fair and appropriate manner

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

- I have been very encouraged by the general standard of work I have seen.
- Staff have been co-operative and helpful
- As I see that the MAB report form has a section for responding to External's comments it would be very helpful to know what these responses have been so that I can see whether my comments are proving useful for the staff team

Baines Wing
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

6 February 2014

Dear

Re: External Examiner's Report –2012/2013 – MA Social Work and BA (Hons) Social Work

Thank you for your constructive feedback on the BA and MA Social Work programmes. Thank you also for your supportive comments about the quality of teaching, course design and curriculum and the quality of student placement provision. In particular we are pleased that the quality of research informed teaching is apparent in the work that you have looked at.

We were pleased that you felt that the teaching appears to be strong and your acknowledgement that while student performance can be varied we have systems in place for supporting students who are not doing so well.

We are pleased that the administrative arrangements have supported you in your role of external examiner. Arrangements have now been made for you to attend the School Progression and Award Board (formerly the School Board of Examiners) which will provide another opportunity for you to meet the team.

We agree that the turnaround time for moderating the marking and returning to the MAB has, at times, been difficult. We have tried to spread the workload and use later MABs wherever possible in the assessment schedule for the year. However particularly towards the end of placement in June for the undergraduate and December for the postgraduate programmes this is difficult because of the need to process final year students in as timely a fashion as possible.

External examiners' comments on the MAB report and the teams' responses are considered carefully by the MAB. The School has adjusted its processes to ensure that external examiners will automatically receive a copy of the team's response.

You also make comments about the range of assessments. At the last validation we did address the issue of assessment variety across the programme and we made further changes to develop this in the recent validation. This included addressing the issue that you raised in relation to assessment on HECS 1082 where there is now greater variety.

The team will make sure that you receive a copy of the programme handbooks.

Thank you for all your hard work this year and for the supportive continuing dialogue throughout the year

Yours sincerely

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:

School of Healthcare

Subject(s):

Social Work

Programme(s) / Module(s):

BA Social Work
MA Social Wok

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

Completed report

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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

Not applicable

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.*

Both the BA and MA programmes meet external requirements for a programme leading to a social work qualification and professional registration. The team have worked hard to develop and implement an imaginative and stretching curriculum relevant to attaining these.

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.*

Aims and ILOs are prepared against external benchmarks and the standards achieved by students, as I have seen them so far, are, at least, on a par with what I see or have seen on other undergraduate and postgraduate social work qualifying programmes.

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.*

From the evidence of assessed assignments which I have reviewed, the quality of University teaching appears to be strong. The variety of assessment mechanisms appears to be replicated in the range of teaching and learning approaches deployed.

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 is always the case, the standard of student performance is variable. The most highly rated assessments reveal very strong abilities to achieve understanding and the capacity to evaluate and critique. The lower marked assignments revealed gaps in required knowledge, were poor in analysis and structure and often exposed weaknesses in basic literacy skills. It was apparent that the course team were aware of such learning issues, remedial facilities are available and possible underlying issues are addressed.

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

I have not engaged in this as yet.

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.

Not applicable

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.

Students reveal in their assignments an appropriate knowledge of relevant 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

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.*

Much information is provided in documentary form. I found the External Examiners' Induction Day very instructive.

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.*

I received very comprehensive 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 some drafts; others were already in place and, I assume had received approval from previous or my colleague external.

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?

I received or was pointed towards an appropriate sample for each assignment. The majority were viewed on-line via Turnitin and had detailed in-text and overall comments. Using Turnitin, although a sample was suggested, I had access to the whole cohort and used this facility on occasions.

I provide specific feedback on each item of assessed work as they are marked throughout the year. I have received responses to my feedback, where I have raised issues on assignments, in the course of the session. A practice which I particularly value is that of markers providing a brief review in the MAB proforma of overall performance in an assessment.

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

I have not yet engaged in reviewing dissertations.

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?

As my term of office commenced in January 2013, I have not as yet attended a board of examiners. I expect to do so later this year.

I have felt on occasions that turn-around times for my reviewing, so that assessed work can be presented to the periodic MABs, are unreasonably tight.

Administrative colleagues are unfailingly helpful.

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

See 14 above.

Other comments

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

Areas of particular strength in the programmes as I have seen them in my first year:

- The strong support for student learning among the University staff team reflected, in particular, in the quality of feedback.
- An appropriately focussed and well organised curriculum.
- The variety of approaches deployed in both teaching and assessment which are both rigorous and developmental.
- The opportunity provided to myself as External Examiner to discuss issues with the course team when I attended the External Examiners' Induction Day.

My main concern relates to the use of Turnitin system for undertaking my reviews as external although I can appreciate its advantages for primary marking. I find the system slow to scroll and the typeface unduly small. More significantly, however, one cannot 'skim' and 'dip into' assignments in the way it is possible with hard copy; and the system does not facilitate comparing assignments or viewing a sample or cohort as a whole. The need for broadband access also constrains opportunities to read assignments - this can be an issue when requested turnaround times are short.

Baines Wing
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

6 February 2014

Dear

Re: **External Examiner's Report –2012/2013**
MA Social Work and BA (Hons) Social Work

Thank you for your report and the very positive comments about the BA and MA Social Work programmes.

We are pleased that you found the external examiner induction day to be informative, the administrative staff to be supportive and that you received sufficient information about the programmes.

We note that you were concerned about the tight turnaround for responding to MABs. We would agree that at times this has been difficult. We have tried to spread the workload and use later MABs wherever possible in the assessment schedule for the year. However particularly towards the end of placement in July for the BA and December for the MA this is difficult because of the need to process final year students in as timely a fashion as possible.

The second issue you raise concerns electronic marking system which the university is using to try and expedite feedback to students in response to student National Student Survey scores around assessment and feedback. This electronic system of marking is still in the early stages of development and we will send your comments onto the development team.

Thank you for all your hard work this year and for the supportive continuing dialogue throughout the year

Yours sincerely,