

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:	Leeds Institute of Health Sciences
Subject(s):	<i>Public Health (International)</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Master of Public Health (International), with Core- and Optional modules.
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MPH

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

No, there are no matters that need urgent attention: on the whole, assessments are fair and relevant to the general course objectives.

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?

Not applicable.

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.

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.*

ILO's are appropriate with the award under consideration, and are well reflected in the structure and content of the various modules.

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.*

Yes, they are comparable to other public health programmes given elsewhere.

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.*

Great care has generally been given to the quality of the feedback to students on their various assignments. Comments are often quite elaborate and critical. Marking shows a rather narrow range of scores across students (mostly between 54 to 70), except for the epidemiology exam where scores vary much more. This leads to the question whether the large emphasis on written assignments across the various modules, is sufficiently discriminatory between strong and weak students. Many assignments have a similar structure, and writing skills and level of English language may strongly influence scores.

Although some assignments had a similar content and structure as assignments in last year for the same module, quite a number of assignments was new. There were a few assignments, such as the sexual and Reproductive health module, that addressed problems of minorities like sex workers, gay people, etc. I particularly liked this because students from some parts of the world live in cultures where a lot of stigma exists and persists on these issues, also among students themselves, and such an assignments forces them to reflect on own attitudes and perceptions.

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.*

Given the emphasis on written assignments across different modules (that I commented upon earlier) , students definitely practice their writing skills.

Critical skills in the sense of analysing data, datasets and figures, and particularly quantitative data, may require more attention; this is an issue also observed in other places, and we observe the same weakness in Amsterdam.

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

Not applicable

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 assignments have been completely modified.

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 don't do primary data collection and research for their dissertation. They do practice basic skills for research, such as literature searches, structuring their writings in assignments and dissertation.

The description of modules shows that the content of the curriculum is up-to-date with current research on the subject.

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, any request was well responded to, and external examiners handbook is very instructive. A meeting with students was arranged mid-year to discuss curriculum content, assessments methods and procedures, and any other concerns of students.

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, all these materials were made readily available.

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?

No, no draft examinations were provided. I have also not explicitly asked for this. Assignments with respective grading instruments were sent together with samples of student work on each module assessment. I was free to choose number of assignments I wished to review and which ones: usually I chose a few in the high range, a few in the middle range and a few in the low range of scores.

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, this was according to my own choice. Scripts were clearly marked and commented, I was pleased with the quality of the feedback to the students, as I remarked earlier.

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

Yes, the choice of dissertations was appropriate, and in line with current priorities in international public health. The dissertations follow a very structured format, facilitating standards of assessment. One of the elements of this standard format/structure, is the option appraisal between various interventions to address the particular problem being subject of the dissertation. Students approached this option appraisal sometimes as choosing between the various options analysed and presented, whereas some of these options are in reality complex interventions, where context and modalities of implementation may be just as important as an option appraisal in narrow sense. This point was highlighted in the examiners meeting. The way option appraisals are used by students appears somehow rigid.

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, as I remarked earlier, this year I was able to attend two meetings, and during the mid-year meeting, I had the opportunity to meet the students.

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

Yes, these procedures are in place and are being given consideration. I participated in two exam board meetings in which examples of mitigation circumstances were discussed.

Other comments

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

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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9 January 2014

Dear <>

External Examiner's report for Public Health (International) 2012-13

As the School of Medicine's Director of Postgraduate Studies, I receive all the External Examiners' reports for the eighteen programmes offered in 2012-13. First, let me thank you for assembling the 2012-13 report for the programmes in Public Health (International).

Good practice

I note that your report states that there are no matters requiring urgent attention.

You comment that the team have introduced some new assignments and you applaud the material relating to global and cultural sensitivities. Thank you for noting this good practice.

I was pleased that you noted that the programme team are providing students with high quality feedback on assignments.

Concerns

You flag some issues about the range of marks awarded and the English language and critical ability of students. These issues have elicited responses in <> letter. I can confirm that they, amongst others, have been discussed by the programme management team and actions proposed in the Quality Management and Enhancement report for 2012-13.

Standards

You state in the standards section that the learning outcomes and programme content are appropriate for postgraduate study in Public Health (International).

continues ...

Director of Postgraduate Studies

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Programme Leader's response

I have enclosed with this letter a response assembled by <>, Programme Leader.

In the last academic session you were able to meet the students in person in advance of their assessment. I think that this is excellent practice and I was pleased to note that the visit had gone well. Thank you so much for your report as External Examiner for the Public Health (International) programmes.

Yours sincerely

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Enc: <> 19 December 2013