

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:	Psychology
Subject(s):	<i>Psychology</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Psychology, Psychology (international)
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

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?

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.*

All the modules I saw had ILOs in line with what I would expect at similar institutions. The course design and content were as I would expect for a BPS accredited psychology degree.

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

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 last report there is a good range of assessments used appropriately.

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.*

I think so. I was reassured by the full use of the range of marks and what I saw with high marks was indeed very good and the low marks were used appropriately too.

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.

There were only relatively minor changes to the programme. Some problems noted in my mid-year reports had already been addressed or were being addressed.

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.

It is pretty clear especially at L3 that the staff are teaching courses in areas they are interested in themselves and this is reflected in a number of interesting topics I had never come across before.

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

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 was provided with a lot of useful information and any additional material I wanted was produced very quickly. Throughout the year the dept has been very responsive to all points I have raised.

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. Where markers had given brief one-line summery justifications for their marks on exam scripts this was particularly helpful.

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, the whole exercise is very well organised.

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

Yes, though, of course I did not get to see what this evidence was.

Other comments

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

Last year I raised some concerns about the mismatch between changes to marking schemes which had not been accompanied by a similar change to decision rules for dealing with borderline cases leading to the potential for grade inflation. I won't repeat the arguments but it seems that nothing has changed in this respect and I would urge the University to continue its review of its borderline thresholds.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Institute of Psychological Sciences
University of Leeds
Leeds

9 July 2012

Dear

External Examining Report 2011/12

I'm extremely grateful for the great work you have done as an external examiner. Many thanks for your positive and thorough report and for the feedback you provided throughout the year in relation to our assessments and marking standards.

We found your comments extremely helpful and held a staff meeting to specifically consider issues you raised in order to ensure we are providing the very best possible student experience. We discussed the points raised by yourself and in your formal reports together with some of the issues we talked about during your recent visit. I have outlined below our thoughts on these:

1) Project marksheets

We agreed to amend our project marksheet to indicate how first and second markers reached their agreed mark, in a similar way to how we operate when a member of our third marker's panel is involved in resolving a dispute between the first and second marker.

2) Annotating exam scripts

We agreed that all staff will be asked to briefly annotate exam scripts which, as you say, will act as an aide memoire if the need to justify a mark ever arises.

3) Profile of marks

We will continue to monitor the module means in our internal examiner and module review meetings to ensure comparability.

4) Guidance for students in writing reports

A consensus in the staff meeting was that we should advise students to follow the APA style guide in their written work. In cases where it is appropriate for students to use an alternative style it is proposed that they will be provided with 'instructions for authors' by the relevant project supervisor, although this process will require approval by the Institute's Taught Student Education Committee. We believe this proposal will help students appreciate the different approaches used within scientific journals, allow academics to tailor their assessment to the norms of their research field whilst also ensuring there is no ambiguity of expectation across the student population.

We will also be considering the following issues in our Taught Student Education Committee:

5) Reading drafts of final year projects

6) The specific project word length

7) Refinements to our marking scale and grade descriptors

We will be in touch again if we make any significant changes on these matters.

It has been a pleasure working with you this year and your input has been really valuable. On a personal note, I greatly liked spending time with you and and enjoyed going out for a meal with you in the evening.

Yours sincerely

Head of Institute

cc: Academic Quality and Standards Team

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

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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

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 honours programme has a range of challenging and interesting modules that enable students to demonstrate their understanding of conceptual and methodological issues across the breadth of subject domains within psychology. All the core elements and skills appropriate to BSc level awards are present in the programme along with specialist, cutting-edge optional modules in the final year. The level of the material and the assessment of students' work were all appropriate.

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 covers all the necessary elements of psychology as stipulated by national/professional bodies in psychology.

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 Institute implements a broad range of assessment methods including the more traditional coursework essays and unseen essay and multiple-choice examinations, as well as oral and poster presentations and short literature critiques. There is ample evidence that the marking of each of these is appropriate to the ILOs.

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.*

Across the range of assessments, it's clear that students have plenty of opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the subject. The Institute is to be commended on its readiness to use the full extent of its marking scale, and there is ample evidence that students producing outstanding work (of which there are many) are receiving marks appropriate to that standing. At the same time, the Institute also clearly is marking appropriately at the lower end of the scale. The overall distribution of awards is broadly what one would expect in a department and cohort such as this and compares well with cognate departments in the country.

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

N/A

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.

I can't comment specifically on this as it's my first year examining in Leeds. However, it is clear from discussions with the Head and other members of staff involved with administering teaching and assessment in the Institute that enhancement of students' learning (and overall experience) is receiving a great deal of positive attention.

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.

It's clear that the research undertaken in the School plays a key role in the UG programme. The specialist modules at final year are directly informed by contemporary research being conducted by the teachers on the courses. The Institute also benefits from having a small but significant element of qualitative research which means that students have access to contemporary conceptual and methodological issues in this aspect of psychology.

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

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.*

Provision of information was efficient and comprehensive. All the necessary materials were made available in electronic or hard copy as appropriate, and all in a timely fashion, and the School Manager (<<>>) was always on hand to answer any queries.

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 had access to all the necessary documentation. Access to the Institute's web pages was very helpful.

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 was provided with coursework and examination questions in a timely fashion. My comments were all of a minor nature and they were communicated to the relevant staff promptly and I received quick and satisfactory responses to all my queries and suggestions.

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 saw a good range of all written assessments covering the range of student performance.

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

Dissertation topics are primarily related to the supervisor's area of research expertise, which is, in my view, the best way of maximising the learning opportunity for students – it means that students get expert input to the process and have the opportunity to investigate topics of contemporary relevance. The assessment of dissertations seems fully appropriate, although I had some minor suggestions for amendments to the process. While the Institute has a thorough and rigorous system for adjudicating in situations where first and second markers are unable to agree a final mark, it's not always clear from the documentation what the basis for the final mark is when 1st and 2nd marker are able to agree. A brief recorded rationale for such final marks would be useful, especially in situations where the two original marks fall on different sides of a classification boundary.

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 arrangements were excellent, due in large part to the efforts of <<>> and her team. I had plenty of opportunity to discuss matters with all relevant staff and was able to attend and speak to the Board of Examiners. It's clear that careful and thorough processes are in place for marking and moderation of assessed work. The Board of Examiners meeting itself was clearly accorded all the significance it warrants and staff in the Institute all took a serious and considered approach to the business.

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

The Institute has a bespoke subcommittee of the BoE to consider mitigating circumstances and it's clear that careful consideration is given to all available evidence before award recommendations are made.

Other comments

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

Overall, my view is that the Institute has sound, robust systems in place that are serving their students well.



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