

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013**

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

Institute of Psychological Sciences
<i>Psychology – see modules below.</i>
Programme: MSc/PGDip Psychological Approaches to Health. <i>Modules: PSYC 5310M; PSYC 5320M; PSYC 5600M; PSYC 5611M; PSYC 5620M; PSYC5632M; PSYC 5642M; PSYC 5651M; PSYC 5670M</i>
MSc/PGDip Psychological Approaches to Health.

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](mailto: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?*

no

**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*

**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 ILO's are appropriate. The students are presented with a broad range of topics from experts in the field. The content and standard of the work is 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 level of work presented is equivalent to other national M level programmes in Psychology and Health. However the structure of the programme is relatively unique as it is not a BPS stage I accredited MSc in health psychology where the course content is more tightly prescribed.

**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 course includes a wide range of relevant assessments including a poster presentation, critique, qualitative and quantitative research analyses, systematic reviewing, essays, exams and a research dissertation. The teaching appears to be of a high quality and the expectations of the assignments are in line with this. A particularly good example was the systematic review which includes a clear ranking rating system for each section which lets students know their strength and weaknesses in key areas such a critical reflection.

On the whole there is a clear marking and second marking process. However, when discrepancies arise between markers the process for the final decision making is less clear and should be explained on the final marking sheet. Where one marker consistently marks lower than the other it may be appropriate to adjust the marks by a set percentage. However, where the pattern is not clear, a process of double marking should be put in place. When a lecture is new in post, a system whereby the first few assignments are double marked by a senior colleague and the grades compared and discussed may be beneficial.

The award classifications were commensurate with the level of the students' work.

**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 broad range of assignments gave the students the opportunity to learn a wide range of new process skills as well as assess their critical thinking skills and knowledge of the subject areas.

The performance of the students was equivalent to similar courses offered at Russell group Universities. However, there is a greater spread of marks towards the lower end than some other top level courses. This may reflect the fact this is a large cohort of students for an MSc in Health and as it is not an BPS accredited health psychology course, the entrance criteria are less stringent.

**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 did not observe any new enhancements but am satisfied that the course is well run and more than adequately assessed.

**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.*

The curriculum is clearly research led. The lectures are research active and use their knowledge of the empirical literature to inform the content of their modules. Students also undertake research in the form of a research dissertation. The dissertations cover a wide range of topics which reflect the research expertise of the team of lecturers. The dissertations

are of a high quality and students are given an impressive handbook to guide them through the research process.

#### 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.*

I received sufficient information. My questions were always answered promptly. The course administrator, <>, is to be commended on all her hard work in this regard.

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 – as above

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 all draft examination papers. The level of the questions was appropriate.

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 to all.

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

The choice of dissertation topics was appropriate. There was a wide range of interesting topics and methodologies.

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 to all

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**

Overall, I was happy with the standard of the work presented and congratulate the staff on running a well organised and interesting MSc degree.

3 February 2013

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Dear <>

**MSc Psychological Approaches to Health – External Examiner’s Report – 2012/2013**

Many thanks for taking the time to come to Leeds in November and for acting as our External Examiner. Thank you also for the constructive feedback you have given us on the course, assessments and procedures. We will take all of this on board and ensure we implement any improvements as we move forward.

We are pleased that, overall, you are happy with the standards of teaching and wide range of assessment on this Masters course. However, we note that you have highlighted an issue over the clarity of the marking and second marking process. In response to this I have set out our current procedures below:

All modules are second marked and the second marking is conducted anonymously with the second marker unaware of the first marker’s mark and comments. If the first and second markers cannot reach agreement on the mark to award, they should inform the module leader who nominates a third marker from the third markers panel. The third marker marks the assignment, blind to the first and second markers’ marks. The third marker then meets with the first and second marker to attempt to agree a mark. If agreement is reached it will be made clear to external examiners that this was how the mark was agreed. If agreement is not reached, but the third marker agrees with either the first or second marker, then a mean of the three sets of marks will be used, with the external examiners asked to ratify the decision.

On the basis of your comments we will make sure that, when future discrepancies in marking arise, the decision making process is fully documented. Hence, at the end of the process, the third marker will document the reasons for the dispute and how agreement on the final mark was reached. This third marker’s document will then be attached to the mark sheet. Furthermore, we will ensure that any new lecturers are fully supported when marking assignments for the first time. Your suggestion of having their first few assessments checked by an experienced marker is a good one and we will implement this going forward.

Thanks once again for your time and feedback. It was great to see you in Leeds. You are a great asset to our Exam Board, and your input is invaluable in maintaining our standards with Masters teaching.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

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Head of Institute