

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined***Faculty / School of:*

Continuing Education

Subject(s):

Education/Learning Support

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Cert HE Learning and Teaching
FD Learning and Teaching
BA (Hons) Learning and Teaching

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

Cert HE
Foundation Degree
B.A. (Hons)

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**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 Quality Assurance
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

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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

I have enjoyed my four years as External Examiner on this programme and am always impressed with the quality of student work and the dedication of the staff team. The on-script marking for this programme is exemplary and makes the work of the External Examiner much easier than is the case in some establishments.
I wish the students and staff all the very best for the future.

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 intended learning outcomes for the programme are compatible with those with which I am familiar on other programmes in other institutions and the standards are appropriate for the award.

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.

In a number of samples provided for me at a range of points across the year and during my visit in June I have had the opportunity to see a substantial number of scripts with associated feedback from internal examiners. I have commented on each of these in detail (see comments box at end of this pro-forma)
I can confirm that the design and structure of the assessment methods is a strength of the programmes and shows good variety including reports, blogs, essays, presentations and group work.

The student outputs that I have seen suggest that excellent standards of teaching and learning are in operation.

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.

Student work is compatible with others at the same level in other institutions with which I am familiar. The quality of feedback is almost always high (see attached sheet for more detail) and students are given clear targets to improve. There is a mismatch between students' abilities in relation to knowledge and content (which is generally very good) and academic writing (which is more of a challenge). As the students progress through the course the excellent feedback which they receive helps them to gradually improve.

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 would, once again, commend the team on the quality of feedback, especially in relation to academic writing and referencing. The on-script marking is detailed and the steady improvement in student work is testament to the success of this.

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 design is informed by current research in education and by the direction of educational policy, as is evident from student assignments. Most of the assignments demand some level of research by the students and this is especially true at level 3. At all levels action research from practice is encouraged in order to link practice and theory.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. 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

10. 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.*

The material was sufficient and it was especially useful to have work sent by post in manageable batches across the year so that it could be examined in more detail prior to the visit. This then allowed more time during the visit to concentrate on the most recent work.

11. 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.*

All appropriate documentation was sent

12. 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?

See above - it was very useful to receive the work through the year.

13. 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?

Sufficient assessed work was made available to feel confident that my evaluation in respect of standards was based on sound evidence. All of the scripts were clearly annotated and marked and I had full marking grids supplied.

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

The choice of subjects for the final research project (dissertation) was appropriate and the standard of assessment was excellent (see section "other comments" below for more detail).

15. 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?

All administrative arrangements were excellent

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

These issues were identified at the Examination Board.

Other comments

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

Detailed comments about the samples seen:

LLC 1376 Skills and Processes of Learning

This was a fascinating set of assignments which I enjoyed reading. On-script marking and feedback was excellent and will be a big help in supporting students to move forward, especially in relation to key skills such as academic writing, punctuation, grammar and referencing.

I think the marks demonstrate a fair spread but I also think that they are all a little harsh for level 1, especially given the high-level skills required to produce a truly reflective piece of work.

LLC1385 Teaching Skills for Support Staff

These assignments are a credit to those who teach on the programme. Students have clearly read widely and been given the tools to reflect on the theory and show how it can be applied to practice. The on-script marking is, again, comprehensive and helpful - especially for weaker students. All grades and feedback agreed.

LLC2226 Work Based Learning 2

These assignments present a contract for future study and show a very interesting range of different ideas; I look forward to reading the outcomes later. The on-script feedback is very good and helpful and the main feedback summarises key learning points well. I also agree with all the marks. One minor suggestion - some of the working titles are unrealistically grand and perhaps should be identified as such from this early stage. My own experience, teaching a similar module, is that if they begin with an overly grand title they then go on to make the mistake of claiming earth-shattering revelations from a sample of six children in one setting! For example one student's "An analysis of behaviour management in primary schools" would perhaps be better re-titled as "An analysis of behaviour management in primary school Y".

Module LLC 1385 Teaching Skills for Support Staff Assignment 2

The students had clearly been challenged by this assignment and some had found it very daunting. Nevertheless they had, for the most part, done a good job in tackling the micro-teaching session and then explaining it and evaluating it.

The marks are all agreed and the feedback, both on-script and in the feedback boxes, is exemplary.

LLC 3948 Issues in Professional Practice

This is a very demanding assignment and the students have risen to it very well indeed. One essay is particularly fluent and insightful - not easy when tackling issues around ethical dilemmas.

The on-script marking is excellent and challenges the students to think more deeply about their judgements and arguments as well as identifying more prosaic errors for correction.

All marks and comments agreed.

LLC 1376 Skills and Processes of Learning Assignment 2

This was another set of very interesting assignments which were well marked with excellent feedback both on-script and in the final feedback section (although you missed correcting one student's title "Effective and Ineffective Approaches to Learning" which conjures quite a good mental picture).

I agree with all the marks given and was pleased to see that students who had done well in assignment 1 had kept

up the same standard in this assignment.

LLC 2075 Independent Study Project 2

I saw two pieces of work for this assignment, both of which had gained 1sts. Both students have used theory very wisely and well to reflect on their own learning in a range of situations outlined in the blogs. There are a large number of grammatical errors in both pieces which remain uncorrected; I am assuming that this is because they occur within the blog entries and not the more academic reflective sections and this has been deemed to be acceptable.

LLC2219 Coaching and Mentoring Workplace Assignments 1 and 2

This was a fascinating set of assignments and the students had used a diverse set of situations in their blogs. The reports showed an excellent grasp of theory in making sense of their experiences from the blogs, especially their grasp of Rogers' ideas. The work displays the usual '2nd-year-lapses' in relation to referencing and it was good to see this picked up on several of the scripts.

I am happy to agree with all the marks awarded.

LLC 3948 Issues in Professional Practice Assignment 2

What a super set of assignments. These were a pleasure to read/look at. I was particularly impressed with the standard of some of the work and with the choices of topic which included current debates at national level.

I am happy to agree all the marks awarded and to agree with the feedback given.

LLC 2075 Independent Study Project Assignment 2

I saw two pieces of work for this assignment, both of which had gained 1sts. I had previously seen Assignment 1 so was aware of the underpinning logs which the students had prepared.

I am a little concerned about the high marks. Usually the criterion for 70+ is work which is written to the highest academic standards and which displays significant research and reading. Neither of these pieces would seem to hit these buttons although they are undoubtedly good pieces of work.

Module LLC2219 Coaching and Mentoring in the Workplace x 2 assignments (late submission)

I have read this single assignment and the feedback provided and I am in full agreement with the marks awarded and the feedback given. The reflective log showed some promise but the subsequent report was superficial and failed to meet the criteria for a pass.

Module LLC2226 Work Based Learning 2

These were very interesting presentations and the range of topics reflected a wide span of interest from the students. The feedback is clear and detailed and gives the students good guidance for future improvement. From the evidence provided in the slides and the feedback I am happy to agree the marks.

Module LLC2228 Using Stories

I looked at six assignments for this module including one 'first' and one 'fail'. The student work was very good and very well presented in most cases. The on-script marking is thorough and should prove very useful to students in identifying areas for improvement. The failed essay was extremely weak and 36 is possibly rather generous but, overall, all the marks are agreed.

Module LLLC2260 Education Perspectives and Policy

The students have clearly found this to be a very challenging assignment. It is also clear that many of this cohort still struggle with basic academic writing in relation to spelling, grammar and punctuation and also to key skills such as citation and accurate referencing.

The feedback and the on-script comments are detailed and focused and should be very helpful to the students.

Module LLLC 3949 Extended Research Project

I have looked at three pieces of work for this module and agree with all of the first markers' comments. One piece of work (discussed at the Examination Board) was particularly good in terms of both content and analysis. The student has engaged well with the subject matter and associated reading. The literature review is excellent in its ability to compare and contrast a range of perspectives and the methodology and discussion are clear. I fully agree with the marker's comments and the grade awarded. The errors of presentation are annoying as the student could have achieved a "first" with better proof-reading and a little more care; nevertheless a good piece of work. The other two scripts were good pieces of work which had been accurately graded and the feedback was, as usual, excellent.

LLC 3951 Involving Parents/Carers in Learning – Written assignment

I looked at six assignments for this module and found the level of student work to be satisfactory, the feedback to be helpful and constructive both in summary and on the scripts. I was a little baffled by the range of marks for communication in the marking grids as these did not seem to accurately reflect the range of ability in this sub-section. This was especially true of one of the students who had gained a communication mark of 75 despite making errors of grammar, punctuation and referencing. The grades awarded for knowledge and analysis did, however, truly reflect the work seen.

LLC3951 Involving Parents/Carers in Learning - Evaluation

I have looked at a range of scripts for this assignment and agree with all the marks awarded. The on-script marking is extremely helpful and the summative feedback provides clear targets for improvement. All grades and feedback agreed.

Module LLLC2231 Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

I examined three pieces of work for this module, two of which were failed pieces. The work was well marked with lots of guidance in the on-script and summative marking but the two failed pieces both seemed to show clear problems with citation which could lead them to charges of plagiarism. I understand that this has been addressed by the team.

Module LLLC 3952 Researching in the Sector

I have looked at a sample of assignments for this module, some of which were critiques of a piece of published work and some of which were personal research proposals. The students have done some very satisfactory work

on both assignments and I agree with all the marks and the feedback.

Module LLLC1311 Basic Approaches to Managing and Resolving Conflict

The blog elements of the assessment for this module made fascinating reading but were difficult to assess as an outsider. Lots of the writing involves use of slang terminology but I assume that this is acceptable because of the nature of a blog. The second element of the assessment links very clearly to the blog but is a more academic piece of work, however some students have continued to use conversational terms which really need to be identified as inappropriate. All the marks are agreed and the summative feedback is accurate and helpful but more on-script identification of errors would, I think, be of benefit to students - especially those who are weak in the area of written communication.

June 2014

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xth November 2014

Dear <>

External Examiner's Report for 2013-14

I am writing to thank you formally for your work over the last year, and indeed throughout your period of appointment, as our External Examiner for Learning and Teaching. It is of great value for us to have had the benefit of your observations as a practitioner who brings such knowledge and experience in the field. I know that <> and <> in particular, have warmly appreciated the opportunities to reflect with you on issues and developments within the programme and have gained a great deal from your careful and detailed feedback on individual assignments.

Over the last few months, we have been considering feedback that we have received from our students, teaching staff and external examiners and formulating plans for the 2014-15 academic session. In the light of this, I would like both to respond to your own report and to give you a broader sense of our thinking across the range of the LLC's provision.

It is good to note from your reflections on four years in post that you have consistently been "impressed with the quality of student work and the dedication of the staff team" and find the on-script marking to be "exemplary". More specifically for this year, you confirm the appropriateness of learning outcomes and standards and commend the design, structure and variety of assessment methods as strengths of the programme. You also note that the programme is properly grounded in current research and is effective in engaging students in action research at each stage in their learning.

You commend "the quality of feedback, especially in relation to academic writing and referencing" with students receiving "clear targets" for improvement. It is good that you see evidence of the positive impact that this has on students as they progress through the course but we also note your observation of a "mismatch between students' abilities in relation to knowledge and content (which is generally very good) and academic writing (which is more of a challenge)" and we recognise this as an area for continuing development.

Moving on from your own field, please find enclosed a summary of feedback from all of our external examiners. You will see that your positive evaluation of our learning and teaching, feedback and support for students is shared across the range of examiners. Points for development are generally programme-specific though,

wherever appropriate, we are careful to ensure that recommendations are considered across our provision as a whole.

Feedback from students through the NSS and the University's Programme Experience Survey continues to show a very positive picture, with strong satisfaction scores across all areas of the survey. It is particularly encouraging to find that students' satisfaction on assessment and feedback remains high (and significantly above national averages) in a year where we have introduced new assessment criteria and feedback arrangements. Please find enclosed a copy of our action plan for 2014-15 which summarises the data from surveys and sets out the key developments that we are looking to take forward in the current year.

During 2013-14, we also had our Student Academic Experience Review. This is a process which takes place every five years for all departments in the University. It involves formal review by a panel of colleagues from across the institution supported by an external reviewer, in this case the Director of the Institute for Lifelong Learning at <> University. The panel considers documentation, including our own self-assessment, interviews staff and students and then formulates a report to the University's Taught Student Education Board. Please find this report attached, for your information. We have been very encouraged by its positive findings, including commendations for good practice, and have been working on following-up proposals for further development (as you will see from the action plan which I am also enclosing).

Thank you, once again, for all of your work on our behalf as External Examiner. It is great to read that you have found the role enjoyable and, for our part, we have certainly much enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity of working with you.

With all good wishes,

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Interim Director
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