

## 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:

ESSL, Education

Subject(s):

Childhood Studies

Programme(s) / Module(s):

EDUC 1001 Processes of learning: Thinking and Knowing  
 EDUC 1117 Understanding Child Welfare - History, Policy and Practice  
 EDUC 1601 Children, Families and Society: A Sociological Introduction to Diversity and Equal Opportunities  
 EDUC 2003 Using and Doing research  
 EDUC 2401 Inclusive Education  
 EDUC 2602 Social and Cultural Constructions of Childhood and Youth  
 EDUC 3550 Child Welfare and Young Children  
 EDUC 3805 Dissertation  
 EDUC 3903 Children, Families and Cultural Diversity: Philosophical Perspectives

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

BA

**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](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*

There are no matters of urgency

**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*

The procedures of the School are well established and maintained. Over my period as external examiner to date, I have not noted any reduction in the development of the programme. All academics involved are dedicated to the further development of the programme and new staff seem to be well inducted to its systems and procedures.

## 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 ILOs seem appropriate and the standards of outcomes achieved seem commensurate with other programmes of this level and content in other HE Institutions.

### 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.*

It would have been helpful for the national benchmarks and FHEQ to be made available to examiners prior to the examination of scripts. Perhaps this could be arranged for the next session?

### 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 assessment methods, while in the main taking the form of written course work, do demonstrate a good variety of opportunities for students to develop and evidence their understanding. I was impressed with such methods as responding to seminar presentations by invited speakers; reports on own learning as well as standard essays. The team should be encouraged to continue to innovate in the form that assessment takes as this can only benefit a student cohort that is normally very varied in aptitudes and talents.

### 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.*

See above

### 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.*

Since the previous year, the team has altered the assessment procedure introducing a more staggered word count for assignments increasing steadily over the three years. This is intended to offer more scope for staff to offer constructive formative assessment. The effectiveness of this will need to be monitored closely and I will be interested to see the effect – hopefully positive – in the results from the next student cohort.

### 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 dissertation allows students to undertake research and this works very effectively for the strongest candidates. Research methods are taught at the appropriate level and reading lists, in the main, reflect research led knowledge. The team might do well to check that they are referring students to the very latest research reported in their fields of interest. Both examiners noted that the research of staff was not embedded to any extent in the curriculum and this was an area for development

## 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.*

The information offered was sufficient

**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.*

All documentation was offered in good time by a very efficient support staff team.

**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 offered an opportunity to comment on these in good time and did so. There were opportunities to discuss changes with relevant staff.

**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. However, the second batch I received only three days before my remarks were required. This was far too tight a schedule to do a full examination of the work. I would suggest that if insufficient time exists again that examiners be invited to look at work at Leeds prior to the exam board.

**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

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

Yes – all this is handled very well.

## Other comments

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

On the teaching of research methods, the module EDUC2003 is well designed and the assignments really develop a good understanding of research methods. The students are required to critically evaluate research reports published in academic journals. A few questions I would want the team to consider to further strengthen this aspect - How are the articles chosen each year? Do they reflect a good spread of research methods? Which are the most popular? Can the team learn anything from that about the need to develop understanding of the less popular methodologies? It is necessary to award students who adapt and develop research methods and tools at the dissertation level and this needs to be encouraged at level 2.

I was pleased to see that the number of late submissions has reduced in number and understand this is due to the facility of online submission which is to be welcomed since late submissions tended to effect weaker students disproportionately.

## Ethics

Statements on ethics I noticed, particularly in the dissertations, were rather formulaic not reflective of own experience and application to the research in hand

Ethics statements in even the highest quality dissertations could, I believe with encouragement go one step further. Could the teaching team supervising dissertations encourage students to reflect on any ethical concerns that occurred to them in the process of carrying out the research that could add to or question ethical procedures ?

## EDUC2602

In module educ2602 students are required to carry out an analytical discussion of a site with images and text. They tend to rely on discourse analysis some of them even mentioning this as a technique. However I did note a lack of confidence and understanding of this approach and wondered whether the team could strengthen the teaching about DA in EDUC2003 – perhaps ensuring that one of the articles offered to critique uses DA.

I noticed that one student used Henri Giroux who was credited for going beyond the reading list ! Given interest in discussing Disney in this module, I would have thought that Giroux might have been a key text. Also a recent book by David Whitely - *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation*. Aldershot and Burlington, USA: Ashgate.

As the subject matter is rapidly changing I would have liked to see more awareness in the student work that their references appear to be recent but in fact because of the context may be severely dated.

## Feedback on assessed work

As in previous years feedback is of especially good quality and I noticed that very appreciative remarks were made about aspects of the weaker work while giving appropriate constructive criticism. This is very good practice.

## Changes in the policy effecting word count

I noted that one of the effects of this change was that one of the methods of assessment required students to write a report under 1000 words. Can students achieve highly within so little word count? I would suggest this is something the team should seriously consider.

## General Issues

I was little disappointed not to meet more or all tutors involved in teaching the programme at the Exam Board. I was also disappointed not to be able to meet students.

Results 2.1 marks seem at the lower end generally? This may be worthwhile checking.

10 November 2013

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Dear <>

On behalf of the School of Education, I would like to thank you for your detailed and comprehensive report for the 2012-13 BA Childhood Studies programme.

We were pleased to receive your positive comments on

- the focus on supporting students through high quality teaching and learning and consistently high and timely assessment and feedback;
- the student work that you reviewed, some of which you defined as being of a very good standard with some outstanding critical and theoretically engaged work;
- the utilization of a range of assessment methods including the use of some innovative formats particularly those with a reflective component;
- the rigorous and fair assessment processes.

We note your comments regarding your request *that national benchmarks and FHEQ are made available to examiners prior to the examination of scripts.*

We will ensure that these documents are available to you this year.

We also note your comments regarding *the alteration of the assessment procedures, introducing a more staggered word count for assignments increasing steadily over the three years. This is intended to offer more scope for staff to offer constructive formative assessment. The effectiveness of this will need to be monitored closely.*

The team is aware of the need to monitor the effect of this alteration and they have devised various activities within modules that increase the amount of formative assessment. In addition to this, it will be an item for discussion and evaluation at the end of year Undergraduate meeting.

We also note your comment regarding the second batch of papers which you received only three days before your remarks were required. We agree that this is far too tight a schedule to do a full examination of the work and we will endeavour to get the scripts to you in good time in future. If this situation, unfortunately, happens again, we will ensure that examiners are invited to look at work at Leeds prior to the examination board.

We further note your comments on *the teaching of research methods. The module EDUC2003 is well*

*designed and the assignments really develop a good understanding of research methods. The students are required to critically evaluate research reports published in academic journals. A few questions I would want the team to consider to further strengthen this aspect - How are the articles chosen each year? Do they reflect a good spread of research methods? Which are the most popular? Can the team learn anything from that about the need to develop understanding of the less popular methodologies? It is necessary to award students who adapt and develop research methods and tools at the dissertation level and this needs to be encouraged at level 2.*

Regarding EDUC 2003 Using and Doing Research, the team will ensure that the selection of papers offered to students addresses as broad a range of methodological approaches, tools and techniques as possible, whilst at the same time, ensuring the papers offer a good range of subject matter. We note your comments regarding the teaching of the full range of research possibilities, the team ensures that the module content includes a broad range of methodologies and, in addition, the students are given opportunity during the teaching of the module to develop a range of research instruments. Students tend to develop one of the 'usual' research methods (i.e. interview, questionnaire, observation); however they have sessions on other methods within the module, some of which are taught by colleagues with a particular expertise in the area. In the revised Childhood Studies programme (Level 2 will be taught from the year 2015-2016), the research module will be taught by a number of different colleagues, each contributing a session relating to their particular expertise. We agree with your comment that it is necessary to award students that adapt and develop research methods and tools at the Dissertation levels and the team encourage the student to do this.

We also note your comments regarding *the number of late submissions has reduced in number and I understand this is due to the facility of online submission which is to be welcomed since late submissions tended to effect weaker students disproportionately.*

It has been noted that the number of late submissions has greatly reduced since the introduction of online submission only and, even the weaker students, who tended to submit their work after the deadline, are now managing to submit their work on time.

Further, we note your comments regarding ethics. *Statements on ethics I noticed, particularly in the dissertations, were rather formulaic not reflective of own experience and application to the research in hand. Ethics statements in even the highest quality dissertations could, I believe, with encouragement go one step further. Could the teaching team supervising dissertations encourage students to reflect on any ethical concerns that occurred to them in the process of carrying out the research that could add to or question ethical procedures?*

The team have noted your comments and have discussed them and agreed to encourage the students to go the extra step and consider the wider implications of ethics and reflect on any ethical concerns that occurred to them in carrying out the research.

We note your comment regarding EDUC2602. *In module EDUC 2602 students are required to carry out an analytical discussion of a site with images and text. They tend to rely on discourse analysis, some of them even mentioning this as a technique. However, I did note a lack of confidence and understanding of this approach and wondered whether the team could strengthen the teaching about DA in EDUC2003 – perhaps ensuring that one of the articles offered to critique uses DA. I noticed that one student used Henri Giroux who was credited for going beyond the reading list! Given interest in discussing Disney in this module, I would have thought that Giroux might have been a key text. Also a recent book by David Whitely *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation. Aldershot and Burlington, USA: Ashgate.**

*As the subject matter is rapidly changing I would have liked to see more awareness in the student work that their references appear to be recent but in fact because of the context may be severely dated.*

As noted above, in EDUC 2003, one of the journal articles uses discourse analysis as the methodology and, although this is not currently taught in the sessions, the structure of the module in the revised programme will ensure that students have direct instruction on this. Regarding the teaching on EDUC 2602, more emphasis will be given in lectures on the module to support students' learning in this area. Furthermore, learning resources will be developed for next year in order to strengthen students' understanding of. You further note that Henri Giroux could perhaps be considered a key text on a module which discusses Disney. However, the emphasis on this module is not on Disney per se, although many students elect to analyse Disney websites as pertinent to the

study of social and cultural constructions of childhood. This may well reflect previous learning on EDUC 1172 which does cover Disney on the module and for which Giroux is a key text. For next year, some of Giroux's other works, *Youth in a Suspect Society* (2008), along with his chapter in the forthcoming 'Critical Youth Studies for the 21st Century' will also be included on the reading list.

We have also noted your comments regarding the changes in the policy effecting word count. *I noted that one of the effects of this change was that one of the methods of assessment required students to write a report under 1000 words. Can students achieve highly within so little word count? I would suggest this is something the team should seriously consider.*

When the changes in policy, which effected the word count, were initially considered, this issue was discussed and the team felt that as this piece of work is at the start of the session, it is appropriate to set the word count at 1000 words. Additionally, there is a substantial amount of formative work in this module.

We further note your comments regarding *your disappointment not to meet more or all tutors involved in teaching the programme at the Exam Board. I was also disappointed not to be able to meet students.*

The team are aware of both of these issues and we endeavour to encourage as many as staff as possible to attend the Examination board; however, some staff have other more pressing commitments at this time of year. Regarding meeting the students, the examination boards for Undergraduate students are held very near to the end of the academic year and it is sometimes the case that students have already returned home for the summer. The students who live locally are often invited to lunch with the external examiners but they very often have work commitments and are unable to attend.

Your final comment remarks on the results of Level 3 students. *2.1 marks seem at the lower end generally? This may be worthwhile checking.*

The Programme Leader for Childhood Studies and the Student Administration Team have checked these results and can confirm that the marks in the 2.1 category are indeed at the lower end of the category but there does not appear to be any significant difference between this set of marks and marks from previous years.

Once again, the programme has recruited well nationally for the coming year. The views of external examiners have continued to be very helpful in the development of the course and have provided a source of encouragement and support for the Childhood Studies Team. We must extend particular gratitude to you for the commitment that you have given to your role during the year. The Team are immensely grateful for the highly professional and positive way in which you have carried out all aspects of your role. The course continues to be recognised as one of an exceptionally high quality; we feel that your contribution to achieving this recognition has been significant and we thank you for that. The Team look forward to continuing to work with you during this year.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education

## 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 Education
Subject(s):	Childhood Studies
Programme(s) / Module(s):	EDUC1172 Children in the Digital Age EDUC1602 Early Years and Primary Education: an Introduction to the Principles and Practices of Early Years and Primary Education EDUC1901 The Social Child EDUC 2601 Early Years and Primary Education: Context, Curriculum and Practice EDUC 2901 How Children Learn and How Adults Can Help Them EDUC 3804 International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Care EDUC 3805 Dissertation EDUC 3901 Ecological Approaches to Child Development
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

**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](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*

NA

**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?*

NA

**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 Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme and for each of the modules I am examining are appropriate.
- The standards of the work that I sampled are commensurate with other programmes I am familiar with at the same level

**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.*

- The assessment methods are well designed across the programme as a whole in order to ensure a range of different types and to assess Intended Learning Outcomes.
- The second marking process appears to be well managed and robust. Where I sampled assignments examined by both a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marker the process was clearly recorded with 2<sup>nd</sup> marker comments providing rationale for the mark and sometimes a further adjustment of marks in the light of the second marker judgment.
- I saw very helpful and constructive advice offered with feedback comments across all the modules I examined. I noticed a good match between the comment and the assigned mark. Sometimes tutors are tempted to provide encouragingly positive feedback in order to motivate and encourage which is misaligned with the mark but I did not see this mismatch on the samples I looked at. There was constructive advice on such things as paragraphing, structure, proof reading and also the need to maximise the allocated word allowance. Surprisingly a few samples seemed to fall short of the allocated word length.
- I was impressed with the detailed attention given to the communication of tutor comments in different forms. Many of the samples I saw had comments in the margins of the assignments, together with a checklist overview of performance according to key indicators, as well as a paragraph providing a rationale for the mark and comments on how to improve future work. This is an impressive attention to detail and is especially commendable given the high number of students.
- Student performance on the work I have sampled suggested a very good quality of teaching and learning. On the whole the students demonstrate a capacity to engage with and apply educational theories to educational contexts.

**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 standards attained by the students are largely comparable to the programmes I am most familiar with at <> University: BA/BSc in Psychology in Education and our older, now defunct, BA in Education Studies. The former is similar to the Childhood Studies degree in its balance of theory and application and its intention to equip students for professional roles working with children and young people. The standards are very comparable across these programmes.
- With regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the cohorts, I noticed that several specific issues were of particular concern within tutor feedback to weaker students:
  - the need to go beyond module readings and engage in wider reading, ( an issue that module tutors need to continually reinforce verbally and in written feedback to students);
  - the need to access more bona fide research in peer reviewed articles. In some cases tutor feedback drew attention to the inadequacies of the students' literature sources such as overuse of web sites and newspaper reports. The advice to use peer reviewed journal articles may need more support through early teaching on how to discriminate between authoritative and well evidenced sources and inadequate sources. The Part 1 'critical reading' task is helpful in this respect;
  - the need to develop a more 'academic voice'. There is advice within the module handbooks on where students can access help on writing support

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

NA

**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 was contacted mid way through the year to approve of a change in word lengths for assignments. I recognised the intention behind the proposed change to develop a more coherent line of progression for the students from year 1 through to year 3 through the gradual increase of word lengths for written coursework. The change seems a good way of addressing progression issues for students and has the added advantage of reducing staff marking workload
- During my recent visit to Leeds for the June external exam board I was informed about the significant review of the changes that are currently underway to the programme. This is timely as the current form of the programme has been in existence for many years.
- A minor change is the addition of the tutor photo on handbooks which is helpful for students.

**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 seems that plans for the new version of this programme will allow more scope for tutors' research specialist areas. This is a very welcome development

**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**

I have received mentor support from <> who used to teach on this programme and who is currently the other external examiner. Three external examiners met together before the exam board on June 2013 and had a useful discussion about student engagement in wider reading .

## 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.*

The material was sufficient. I received the current external examiners handbook and additional necessary documentation

**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. I was provided with a good spread of assessed work across the student achievement levels  
Yes scripts were clearly marked and there was also clear evidence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> marking process

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

Yes. I saw a range of topics, and methodologies covering library based as well as empirical studies and covering a range of achievement levels. Dissertations were also sampled by the 2<sup>nd</sup> external examiner.

**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?**

Administrative arrangements were very good however the turnaround time for looking at samples was tight this year. I was able to attend the Board of Examiners on 19<sup>th</sup> June and was satisfied with the recommendations of the Board

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

Yes. I was convinced that mitigating circumstances had been carefully considered before the Board. Cases were referred to briefly (whilst preserving confidentiality) and it appeared that the necessary evidence had been carefully considered.

## Other comments

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

12 November 2013

<>

Dear <>

On behalf of the School of Education, I would like to thank you for your detailed and comprehensive report for the 2012-13 BA Childhood Studies programme.

We were pleased to receive your positive comments on

- the focus on supporting students through high quality teaching and learning and consistently high and timely assessment and feedback;
- the student work that you reviewed, some of which you defined as being of a very good standard with some outstanding critical and theoretically engaged work;
- the utilization of a range of assessment methods including the use of some innovative formats particularly those with a reflective component;
- the manner in which students are challenged and allowed to demonstrate a good competence in critical writing, researching and reviewing literature;
- the rigorous and fair assessment processes.

We note your comment regarding *the need to go beyond module readings and engage in wider reading (an issue that module tutors need to continually reinforce verbally and in written feedback to students) and your comment regarding the need to access more bona fide research in peer reviewed articles. In some cases tutor feedback drew attention to the inadequacies of the students' literature sources such as overuse of web sites and newspaper reports. The advice to use peer reviewed journal articles may need more support through early teaching on how to discriminate between authoritative and well evidenced sources and inadequate sources.*

The team is aware of this issue at each level of the programme and takes steps to ensure that students are reminded on many occasions of the need to engage in wider reading. To help with this, students have a session (in connection with the module EDUC 2003 Using and Doing Research) with the University librarian with responsibility for the School of Education where they are taught how to search for journal papers, official papers etc. through a variety of databases. Alongside this session, there are a number of Work Books which are produced by the Library and explore different strategies to search databases; the students have access to these and can work through them at their own pace. These Work Books are also available as an electronic source through the Library website. Additionally, in relation to these issues, students are also reminded of the Skills@Library resource (this supports students and staff to enhance their learning and teaching).

We also note your comment regarding *the need to develop a more 'academic voice'. There is advice within the module handbooks on where students can access help on writing support.* In addition, at the start of the year, all students are encouraged to attend sessions on good academic practice which includes advice on how to avoid plagiarism and good referencing techniques. In addition to this, all Level 1 students are required to pass a plagiarism quiz within the first few weeks of their study at the University. In relation to this point and those above, from September 2014 a major

revision of the Childhood Studies programme will be introduced (one level each year) and that this will provide an opportunity for a more radical approach to some of the issues you have raised.

Once again, the programme has recruited well nationally for this year. The views of external examiners have continued to be very helpful in the development of the course and have provided a source of encouragement and support for the Childhood Studies Team. We must extend particular gratitude to you for the commitment that you have given to your role during the year. The Team are immensely grateful for the highly professional and positive way in which you have carried out all aspects of your role. The course continues to be recognised as one of an exceptionally high quality; we feel that your contribution to achieving this recognition has been significant and we thank you for that. The Team look forward to continuing to work with you during this year.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education