

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:

Education

Subject(s):

English

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Secondary PGCE

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

PGCE/PgCE/Postgraduate Certificate in Education Studies

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

n/a

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

n/a

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 learning outcomes are all appropriate for a PGCE course, as are the standards required for awards at Postgraduate and Professional Graduate levels.

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 is comparable with other programmes at these levels (6 and 7) and more specifically with other secondary PGCE programmes.

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.*

Assessment methods are appropriate to the course and to the ILOs.

All the evidence at my disposal, from the observation of trainees teaching and of the professional dialogue between trainees and mentors after lessons, to the scrutiny of their files and e-profiles and their assessed assignments, assured me that this is a well-run course, rigorously assessed. The judgements made of trainees' progress and performance were in line with analogous judgements of trainees on other ITE courses with which I am familiar.

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.*

In their academic writing and in their professional practice, students on the course represent the range of attainment that is to be found on other PGCE courses: the best are genuinely outstanding and all showed a real commitment to the sustained development of their practice.

I observed four of the trainees teaching (i.e. over 30 per cent of the secondary English PGCE cohort). I concur with the judgements made by school-based colleagues and by their university tutors in relation to each of these beginning teachers: all could quite properly be described, in the current parlance, as outstanding.

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.

The increase in word-length of the final assessed assignment (EPS2) has been a positive move, enabling the trainees to explore in appropriate detail the intervention about which they were writing.

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.

All three M-level assignments require students to investigate local policy and practice, including their own practice as classroom teachers, and to consider such practice in the light of their reading of theory and published research. One of the challenges for any M-level PGCE course is to induct students into research methodologies and frameworks within the context of what, necessarily, must remain a course of practice-based professional training. Generally speaking, the course meets this challenge successfully. Last year, I expressed some doubts about the third and final assignment being presented as a piece of action research. I am pleased that an attempt has been made to address this, so that now, by and large, the framing of this intervention as 'action research' has disappeared (save for a few legacy traces).

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.

Appropriate material was made available to me – in a thoroughly efficient manner.

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.

Appropriate documentation was received.

It was also helpful, this year as last, to have access to the students' e-portfolios.

The schedule of visits was clear and helpful.

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?

n/a

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?

Yes.

As was the case last year, tutors' responses to students' work were admirably detailed.

The marking of these assignments is careful, rigorous and responsive to the achievements of the writers. I do, though, have one observation to make in relation to a slight difference revealed in the comments (and marks assigned) by two markers in their responses to the same EPS1 assignment. There is in higher education more generally a tendency to promote the value of recent, relevant research and scholarship. This is all very well, I'm sure – except that sometimes what emerges as the corollary of this approach is an undervaluing of less recent literature. This worries me, on at least two counts. First, it can lead to a student being penalised, in my view unfairly, for her/his choice of literature with which to engage, rather than the student's work being judged on the basis of the quality of the engagement with ideas within the broad field of education and its related disciplines. Second, there can be considerable advantages in students becoming aware, through their reading of less recent literature, of the history of current debates, preoccupations and practices.

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

n/a

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?

I have to say that I thought the whole process, including the operation of the exam board, was exemplary. The organisation was very efficient, students' achievements were considered with care and proper seriousness, and the recommendations of the Board were, in my judgement, both fair and just.

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

They were.

Other comments

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

All of the trainees whom I met, both when visiting schools and in the focus group at the university, were hugely appreciative of the contribution that university-based colleagues had made to their development as teachers – and indeed to their successful completion of the course. Trainees spoke with real warmth and gratitude about the visits they had received from their university tutors. They recognised that the discussions they had had with their tutors following lesson observations had been important moments of professional learning. As one trainee noted, these discussions had focused on progress in meeting the Standards but they had also gone beyond this: tutor had treated as a person, and hence had given the confidence to develop practice. Trainees were equally appreciative of the opportunities provided by Method sessions at the university for them to participate in a wider community of practice, to learn from each other and to enhance their practice as English teachers.

All of the English trainees had come onto the course through the School Direct training route. A significant proportion of them had, at different stages in the course, run into significant difficulties on their placements. It is a sign of the strength of the partnership between the university and schools that these problems had all been addressed - and resolved in ways that enabled the trainees to continue on the course and to thrive as beginning teachers.

Because of the fact that all the English trainees came onto the PGCE course through the School Direct route, I feared that I might find this year a greater resistance to the assessed written assignments – a sense that these were a purely 'academic' requirement of the PGCE course, and not something that contributed to their development as teachers. This attitude would not have been surprising, given the extent to which the public discourse around initial teacher education in general and SD in particular has encouraged a narrowly instrumental view of teaching as a (merely) practical activity. But this was not at all what I found; on the contrary, all the trainees who spoke to me were clear that the M-level assignments had made a significant contribution to their formation as teachers, offering valuable opportunities to reflect on aspects of their practice and of the institutional practices that they had observed and in which they were implicated.

There are some very impressive responses to the first assessed written task (EPS1). At best, students took up the invitation to critique the policies and practices that they had encountered at their TP1 school. Their analyses were theoretically informed and there was a recognition that the relation between practice and theory is often far from straightforward or transparent. There was a heartening understanding of the complexity of human behaviour and a readiness to engage with the moral principles that (might) inform the management of behaviour in the context of schooling.

Likewise, students' responses to the Method assignment (M1) represented a focused exploration of the relationship of theory and practice. They produced theorised, and often deeply self-critical, accounts of their own practice, accounts that were in themselves enactments of high-quality professional learning. In my previous reports, I have signalled a note of caution about AfL – about the extent to which it has, in schools up and down the country, become calcified into a set of un- or under-theorised routines – AfL 'done' for the sake of doing it, or demonstrating that it is being done, rather than it thriving as a well understood approach to interventions in learning. The strength of these assignments, however, is partly a product of the fact that they encourage the students to return to the literature, to reconsider the well-worn routines of assessment for learning, to think carefully about what is being achieved in the classroom. It is also worth noting that the trainees whom I met in the focus group on the day of the examination board were very clear that their central concern in this assignment had been on *advanced lesson planning and evaluation*, rather than on AfL as such. It was a point well made, and their assignments are all the better for this orientation.

To conclude: I would want to emphasise that it is my judgement that this is a Secondary English PGCE course of high quality that continues to prepare trainees very well for their work as teachers.

School of Education

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

23 October 2014

Dear

We are very grateful to you for your helpful and supportive report. Your insightful comments will be considered and discussed by colleagues in detail and will inform change to our English course and more widely across our provision.

We were delighted with your very encouraging observations on a number of dimensions of the Secondary PGCE: the management of the course; the rigour of assessment and the detail of tutors' feedback; the outstanding quality of our best students; the running of the Examinations Board which you describe as 'exemplary'. We were particularly encouraged that you observed 'outstanding' teaching and that you shared the same judgement as the mentors and University tutors. We have been working extremely hard to achieve this consistency and it is rewarding that this investment of time and effort is having a positive impact. You note that the changes you suggested should be made to the EPS 2 assignment have been implemented and we agree that the outcomes in relation to these have been positive.

It was especially heartening to learn from your conversations with students that the support University-based colleagues provide and the quality of their teaching are highly appreciated. In this, our first year of involvement in School Direct, you identify that School Direct students had the same positive response to the M-level assignments, their purpose and value, as 'core' students, something which could not necessarily have been taken for granted at the beginning of the year. Your very positive comments on the nature of our assignments and the quality of students' responses confirm that we have a sound assessment base on which to build in future years. We are very grateful to you for these.

Further to the written assignments, we have taken very careful note of your comments on the importance and appropriateness of students' engagement with recent and not so recent literature. We agree that it is the quality of the engagement that is important and that less recent literature gives important insights into events, thinking and debates which have contributed to current policy and practice.

We appreciate very much the time, effort and consideration you have given not only to this extremely helpful report but also to your very positive contribution during the course of your visit in May and again in June.

Yours sincerely

Head of School of Education

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:	Education
Subject(s):	<i>Secondary Maths</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCE

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Completed report

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Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Matters for Urgent Attention

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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?

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 programme aims as well as the ILOs were commensurate with the level of 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.*

The aims of ILOs met the expectations of the national subject benchmark and the programme was comparable to similar programmes at other institutions.

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 in the course were in the form of academic assignments and the practical teaching element of the course in a secondary school. The academic rigour required within the assignments allowed the student teachers to engage with the issues surrounding the pedagogical underpinning of the practices in schools. The practical element was assessed through the teaching of classes and the teaching was regularly assessed with feedback being provided regularly. The development of the student teacher over the course of a placement was reflected upon and the critical question was considered as to whether sufficient progress had been made.

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 achieved by the cohort of students that was comparable to the achievements of the students nationally. The students were given ample opportunity to engage with the teaching standards and to be proactive in taking charge of their development as a teacher. In their schools the students were able to regularly demonstrate their achievements and have those developments recorded through the achievement of weekly targets. These were regularly linked to the Teaching Standards and the students were able to show their development in breadth as well as varying degrees of depth of achievement in the different standards.

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.

Last year students and mentors had found engagement with the e-profiles quite challenging. It is clear that there have been a number of improvements made which enable the mentors and students to engage with the system more productively. This is an area that is continuing to develop and I look forward to an even better engagement of the PGCE students in this area.

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 PGCE Maths subject leader is undertaking a PhD and the nature of this means that this has impacted on the way that the subject is delivered to the students on the PGCE course. The other tutor on the course is an Advanced Skills Teacher in schools and brings a wealth of 'informal' research from experience in teaching. The formal and the informal research provides the PGCE students a variety of pedagogical angles which the students have found to be a very positive experience for their own development as teachers.

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 guidance provided to me was sufficient for me to carry out my role.

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.

Yes

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?

I was made aware of the assessments that the students have and those were appropriate to this course and with other courses nationally. The assignments provide the students with the opportunity to scrutinise aspects of teaching that will help them develop as a teacher

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?

I was provided assignments that had been marked with appropriate annotations that the students would find useful in understanding the rationale for them to understand the level they had achieved. The scripts provided ranged in level and gave a sense of the spectrum of marks that the students were able to achieve. It was also clear that appropriate support had been provided for students to engage with academic writing which was extremely necessary as their degree backgrounds did not necessarily prepare them for this aspect of the course. The comments were formative as well as summative so that students were able to see how they could improve the quality of their academic writing.

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

The dissertations that the students had to engage with encouraged them to think about and engage with the issues that are prevalent in the classroom environment of teaching and learning. A number of the students that I spoke to were able to make links between the theoretical relevance of the assignment and their teaching in the classrooms. The students that appeared to be analytically stronger were able to provide a rationale for how a critical approach, which you are forced to engage with as you do the assignment, makes you embed the idea of a reflective practitioner as a core part of what defines you as a teacher.

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?

The assessment process including Board of Examiners was administered effectively. I was present and felt that the recommendations made regarding the outcomes for the students were entirely appropriate.

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

It is clear that appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with these circumstances and the tutors are aware of how to help the students.

Other comments

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

It is clear that the PGCE secondary maths tutors are very passionate about their subject area and very caring about their students. This was evident in the interactions that I saw between the tutors and the students as well as the feedback that was provided by the students.

The integration of the Schools Direct programme with the traditional PGCE programme has provided the tutors with some challenges which are gradually being addressed. It seems that the SD programme will be a big part of the programme and all indications are that the challenges provided with a change of emphasis in teacher training that the PGCE Maths department will continue provide the relevant provision for its students next year. I look forward to seeing the developments in this area.

I also interviewed an ex-student of the PGCE programme from another subject area and one of the points that was highlighted was the support that the tutors gave in general and the support that the Head of the PGCE programme had provided.

The Professional Coordinating Mentor at one of the schools made a point of explaining the difficulties that they had with a student from Leeds University who was not performing as expected and every decision that the school made was being challenged by the student in terms of blaming the school for not providing adequate support. The tutors from the University were asked to come in and assess how things were going and the quality of support provided by the university for dealing with this student was seen as exemplary by the PCM. made a comparison with another university when a similar incident had taken place and the school was not given the support to deal with that student.

25 January 2015

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Dear <>

We are very grateful to you for your helpful and supportive report. Your insightful comments will be considered and discussed by colleagues in some detail and will lead, I am sure, to enhanced PGCE provision not just in mathematics but across our Secondary PGCE provision .

We were delighted with your very encouraging observations on a number of dimensions of the course: the appropriateness of assignments set; the academic rigour demanded of students in their assignments; the assessment of students' progress over time; the setting of appropriate weekly targets which addressed the breadth and depth of the Standards; the positive impact of work done to improve the effectiveness of the eProfile; the influence of mathematics tutors' research on their students' development as teachers; the support provided by tutors and the Head of the Secondary PGCE; the appreciation of school-based colleagues for the help provided with students experiencing difficulties.

We appreciate very much the time, effort and consideration you have given not only to this extremely helpful report but also to your very positive contribution during the course of your visit in May.

We are deeply grateful to you for your support and collegiality.

With sincere thanks and best wishes

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education