

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):	Provision for Children with Developmental Disorders
Programme(s) / Module(s):	EDUC5811M Developmental Disorders I: Dyslexia and Developmental Coordination Disorder EDUC5812M Developmental Disorders II: Attention Deficit Disorder and Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PG Cert

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

There are no matters for urgent attention.

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 I understand that the team would like me to continue with my role as External Examiner for another year.

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.*

As in previous years, the programme Aims and ILOs were commensurate with the level of the award.

The module objectives ranged from students demonstrating broad understanding of the developmental disorders, through to critically analysing approaches to assessment, identification and management and, importantly, being able to link theory and practice. The module schedule showed excellent coverage of the main issues relating to this field, with the appropriate breadth and depth required for the level of the award.

The standards achieved were appropriate for the award under consideration.

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.*

As in previous years, the Aims and ILOs are in line with similar programmes at my own institution and others that I am familiar with.

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 outline of the module, indicative reference list and the content of student essays suggest that the quality of teaching was very high on these modules. The lecturer is an expert in the field of Developmental Disorder and Special Education, with broad knowledge of relevant theory and practical application of this to the classroom.

The modules are assessed by 4000-word essays, with an appropriate choice of essay titles. These are well aligned with the ILOs and are an appropriate way of assessing knowledge and skills. The choice of titles gives students the opportunity to follow their own interests to some extent and to apply their knowledge of theory to classroom practice.

The marking of work is undertaken by the lecturer for the programme, who is an expert in the field of Developmental Disorder. Second marking of some work is undertaken to check the marks. All marking seems appropriate and in line with the marking criteria. There were a range of marks obtained by students, with some at the top end indicating very high quality work. The upper end of the marking scale is used appropriately with students awarded for top quality 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.*

A range of marks was obtained by the cohort as a whole. At the lower end students found it hard to express themselves clearly in writing - some having English as a second language. Evaluation and critical analysis was lacking in some of the weaker essays.

At the top end students wrote with a confident and engaging style and with clarity of expression. They demonstrated excellent knowledge of the relevant theories and were able to critically evaluate studies and practical classroom approaches at a high level. There were some really excellent pieces of work at the top end.

This range of submitted work seems similar to at my own institution and others that I have worked in.

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.

To my knowledge there have been no changes since last year, except for appropriate updating of references and other materials.

The areas of good practice include the following:

1. Teaching by an expert in the field. This course has the huge benefit of being led by one of the world's experts in this area. The teaching material draws on internationally recognised work, is clearly based in theory, has application to classroom practice and is up to date.

2. Application of theory to practice. It is clear from the course outline, references provided and the student work itself that there is a clear focus on applying theoretical models and principles to real life teaching and classroom practice. Students are encouraged to reflect on the integration of theory and practice and some essay titles focus specifically on the application of research findings to school policy and classroom practice.

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 content of the module is clearly influenced by current research findings in the field of developmental disorder. The lecturer is research active and this comes through in the teaching which is evidence-based and involves critical evaluation of work in the field. The list of references provided to students covers the range of current theoretical perspectives and contemporary issues. The latest diagnostic criteria and guidelines are clearly referred to throughout the course.

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 documentation that I have received has been full and useful.

I would prefer to access module information on line – and to see how this is presented to students. As far as I am aware this has not been possible.

It would also be useful to have access to electronic copies of all student work – in case examiners wish to view this in addition to the scripts they are sent. This has been discussed in past years but not yet actioned.

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.

The documentation that I received was complete and useful.

This included an outline of the module, breakdown of topics covered each week and a list of references.

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 not sent a draft of the essay questions set – and would have liked an opportunity to view these.

As in previous years, I generally felt that the set questions were appropriately challenging for this level of study, although some gave less opportunity for depth of analysis or critical evaluation of research.

As I have suggested in previous year, it would be useful to know how many students attempted each of the titles and the range of marks across each one.

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, sufficient assessed work was made available to me to evaluate the standard of student work. I saw work with a range of marks, showing the breadth of work produced. As noted in (10) above and mentioned in previous years, it might be helpful to have available all student work so that examiners can choose to look at additional scripts if required. I have found that to be usual practice in other institutions.

The assessment processes seem thorough. Marking standards are good, consistent and in-line with the marking criteria. There is evidence of some internal moderation. Students are provided with useful feedback – both in terms of notes directly on their script plus a feedback sheet with comments that relate to the assessment criteria. Comments indicated to students what had been done well and what further work would be needed to achieve a higher grade. My only suggestion for the feedback would be for those at the lower end to ensure that comments are more clearly linked to individual marking criteria.

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

N/A I am not involved in marking dissertations.

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?

As in previous years, the administrative arrangements were exemplary. Everything was extremely well organised and ran very smoothly (despite some University staff being on a marking boycott on the day). The Exam Board was efficient, with appropriate time set aside for discussion. I was able to attend the Exam Board in November but not the one in June. I found staff to be friendly and welcoming.

My only suggestion would be that a greater effort is made to give External Examiners the opportunity to meet and talk to students on the course. I appreciate the difficulties involved with this – but feel that discussion with students is an important part of the external examining process and can reveal information that might be useful to the teaching team.

I was entirely satisfied with the recommendations of the Board.

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

My understanding is that these issues are addressed by the teaching and administrative team prior to the exam board.

Other comments

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

As noted above, I thought it was unfortunate that there was not opportunity to meet with students on the course. Over the last couple of years I have also raised the point that it would be useful to have more feedback from students on the course. It is still not clear to me how feedback from students is gathered on this course. It would be useful to have a module report containing a summary of the feedback obtained from the whole cohort.

I understand that there are plans to merge the two modules that I currently examine – and I was pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this with the module leader. We discussed possible changes to the structure and content of the module, to address some of the more global issues relating to developmental disorders, rather than introduce them one by one. I felt that the proposed new structure would work well.

15 May 2015

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Dear <>

Many thanks for your very helpful and insightful comments you have sent in your role as external examiner to the modules taught by <>.

We are pleased that you are of the opinion that the modules are well taught by a recognized expert in the field and that much is done to enable students to link up to date theory with practical applications of management. This is one of the core aims of the modules. We are also pleased that you think the coverage of the assessment, identification and management of these developmental disorders is of a high order and linked to the up to date appropriate literature,

You have made a number of requests that we will address. First, draft essay questions will be sent to you in advance. Secondly, we will make available to you the statistics about how many students choose which essay titles. We will also examine how we can facilitate more time for the examiners to talk with students. At present it is not the policy to give External Examiners access to the VLE but your comments are a reminder that some Examiners would appreciate this.

We are pleased that overall you do not feel there are any urgent matters to deal with and that you would be available to continue as external examiner. We are particularly grateful for your offer to work on the new structure of the modules.

We recognize the hard work that our external examiners do and we are very grateful to you for the time, effort and expertise you have given to this.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education