

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:	Leeds Institute of Health Sciences
Subject(s):	<i>Public Health (International)</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Master of Public Health (International), with Core- and Optional modules.
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MPH

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

No, there are no matters that need urgent attention: on the whole, assessments are fair and relevant to the general course objectives.

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?

Not applicable, this is the third year that I am external examiner for this program.

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

Not applicable, the idea is that I continue for 1 or 2 more years.

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 aims and intended learning objectives are commensurate with the level of the award, the Masters in Public Health.

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.*

They surely are; they are comparable to other Masters programs where I teach or act as external examiner; and they are also comparable to standards as described for such a program in the literature.

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 quality of the feedback to students on their various assignments is good, and remains at a good level. Comments are often quite elaborate and critical. My comment of former years remains valid. ("Marking shows a rather narrow range of scores across students (mostly between 54 to 70), except for the epidemiology exam where scores vary much more. This leads to the question whether the large emphasis on written assignments across the various modules, is sufficiently discriminatory between strong and weak students. Many assignments have a similar structure, and writing skills and level of English language may strongly influence scores.")

At the <>, where I work and teach, we have more variety in the types of assessments (written assignments, short essay questions, exams with both multiple choice and short essay questions, besides a thesis) and these other assessments mostly result in wider ranges of scores.

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.*

Students get a lot of practice in writing skills.

Difficult to compare across cohorts of students of different years, as the samples that I see are small. On the whole, I guess student level across years is similar.

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

Not applicable.

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.

Some assignments have been revised.

There is less emphasis on the 'option appraisal model' that students used in their assignments and thesis in the past, and that kind of forced them in a certain way of approaching and choosing between interventions for public health problems.

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.

Students don't do primary data collection and research for their dissertation. They do practice basic skills for research, such as literature searches, structuring their writings in assignments and dissertation.

The description of modules shows that the content of the curriculum is up-to-date with current research on the subject.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable

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.

Yes, I receive course guidelines, external examiners handbook; and there is regular e-mail contact on ongoing courses; mid-term, I visit the school for a face to face meeting with the students, discussing their perspectives on course content, teaching and assessment procedures.

The school responds quick and efficient to any demand from my side to see module outlines, sample assessments, etc.

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, see the former point.

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?

Yes, they were appropriate; see also my comment under point 3.

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?

Assignments with respective grading instruments were sent together with samples of student work on each module assessment. I was free to choose number of assignments I wished to review and which ones: usually I chose a few in the high range, a few in the middle range and a few in the low range of scores.

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

Yes, and I was very happy to see that topics chosen for dissertations follow changing paradigms and priorities in international health.

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 attended two meetings of the examiners board, one mid-term, and the final examiners board meeting.

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

Yes, these were appropriately dealt with. The group being rather small, there is a close and empathetic relation with the students, and mitigating circumstances are discussed in an open way.

Other comments

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

No further comments.

School of Medicine
Faculty of Medicine and Health
Worsley Building
Clarendon Way
Leeds
LS2 9NL

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Dear <>



22 December 2014

External Examiner's report for Public Health (International) 2013-14

As the School of Medicine's Director of Postgraduate Studies, I receive all the External Examiners' reports for the eighteen subjects offered at Master's level in 2013-14. Thank you for assembling the 2013-14 report for the programme in Public Health (International).

I note that there were no urgent matters for attention. You comment that the academic standards and content of student work are appropriate for the level of award. In your report, you state that the learning materials are up-to-date and informed by research.

You report that you were given comprehensive access to student work and assessments and the administrative arrangements worked well.

Programme Leader's response

I have enclosed with this letter a response assembled by <>, Programme Leader. <> addresses the points made about the range of marking, the range of assessment types and the reduced importance of the option appraisal exercise.

Thank you so much for your report as External Examiner. Your contributions to the Public Health (International) programme are much valued.

Yours sincerely

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Enc: >< 18 December 2014

Director of Postgraduate Studies

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

18/12/2014

Dear

External Examiner report, Masters in Public Health (International) 2013-14 - response

Thank you for your report of the MPH (International) programme for 2013-14. We were pleased to read of your overall satisfaction with the aims, structure and assessment of this programme.

Please find below responses to three specific comments, referenced by section number.

3. Range of scores across assignments

As you identify, most module and assignment marks are in the 50s, 60s and low 70s. The marking scale is 0 to 100, and markers are encouraged to use the full marking scale, as appropriate. However, and as observed in other higher education settings, some markers may be reluctant to use the very highest end of the scale, when appropriate. In our next Teachers Meeting we will discuss how we can promote and achieve the use of a wider range of marks.

Through discussion of marking at our Teachers Meetings, and the support/process for marking and moderation, we aim to ensure the marks awarded reflect the level of achievement. If there are any specific assignments for which you think that we should be using more of the lower or higher range of the marking scale, please do let us know during the 2014/15 academic year.

3. Range of assessment types

Related to the above comment is the issue of whether the range of assessment types affects the range of marks. The programme uses assessments including long essays, proposals, oral presentations, group reports, posters and the statistics & epidemiology open-book examination. Short essay questions and multiple-choice questions are used rarely. In our previous discussions on the use of multiple-choice questions, some teachers have expressed concerns about whether information and responses to complex public health issues can be simplified into a multiple-choice format. It is possible, therefore, that the absence of multiple-choice questions and short essay questions partly reflects our lack of familiarity with their appropriate use for international public health. In 2014/15, we will raise this issue in our Teachers Meeting and we would be keen to discuss further with you examples of how these assessment types could be appropriate for some modules on the programme.

6. Option appraisal model

We agree that placing less emphasis on the option appraisal model for the dissertation was useful in 2013/14, and we have agreed to continue this approach for 2014/15.

Yours sincerely,

Senior Teaching Fellow
Programme Leader, Masters in Public Health (International) (2013/14)
Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development
Leeds Institute of Health Sciences
University of Leeds
71-75 Clarendon Road
Leeds LS2 9PL, UK
Tel: + Fax: +