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

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Epidemiology and Biostatistics
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	<u>MSc Epidemiology and Biostatistics</u> EPIB5001M – Research Project EPIB5022M – Core Epidemiology EPIB5023M – Introduction to Modelling EPIB5024M – Statistical Inference EPIB5025M – Multilevel and Latent Variable Modelling EPIB5026M – Advanced Modelling EPIB5027M – Advanced Epidemiology EPIB5030M – Professional Spine EPIB5032M – Introduction to Genetic Epidemiology EPIB5034M – Project in Epidemiology and Biostatistics EPIB5035M – Non-Communicable Disease Epidemiology EPIB3036 – Introduction to Clinical Trials
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	MSc

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

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?

I was provided with the previous External Examiner's report for 2012/13. I was not provided with the response of the School.

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

NA

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.*

Yes the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes are commensurate with the level of the award and the structure and content of the programme. The standards set are appropriate for the qualification of Master's degree.

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 and ILOs meet the subject benchmark for similar programmes including Masters in Public Health, and are comparable to, or better than, other programmes with which I am familiar.

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 programme uses a range of assessment methods including coursework, examination, projects, exercises, essays, critical appraisal and self-reflection logs, which allow students to engage with their learning in a variety of formats as well as encouraging some creativity of expression. The arrangements for marking and moderation were fair and the classification of awards carefully considered at the Exam Board, particularly for borderline cases.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods seemed to be of a high standard in the material I observed, which included some lecture materials. Samples of student work were seen for students of different abilities and the marks reflected the quality of the work appropriately. Where marks seemed to be a little low for one new module this was already being addressed by the course team. The majority of students were able to show their skills in presenting complex material in a clear and well-structured way. The dissertation projects covered an impressive range of topics, seemed to be well supervised and were of a high practical standard.

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 academic standards demonstrated by the students were appropriate for the Masters degree programme and their performance comparable to other schemes. Some students struggled with interpretation of results and may improve their performance by being encouraged to write coursework results up in a standard reporting format for certain more statistical modules.

The mixed abilities of the student cohort were reflected in the coursework marks. The range of assessment methods helped weaker students in some respects to demonstrate their skills whilst challenging stronger students to perform well in less familiar modes of assessment eg. through oral or poster presentations, protocol development or critical appraisal.

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.

This is my first year as External Examiner so I am unable to comment on enhancements since previous years.

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.

This is an excellent programme using a range of modern techniques within a research-led curriculum framework. The majority of assessments included some components that were influenced by research. In particular the dissertations included high level research-led material which was linked to tutors research interests and covered a wide variety of topics that encouraged students to select projects that enhanced their own research interests. This made the programme particularly strong and allowed students to demonstrate their individual strengths and capabilities.

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

The programme is very appropriate and relevant as training for a quantitative PhD in the subject.

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

NA

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

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 provided with draft examination papers. The nature and level of the questions were appropriate and my comments were considered.

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 saw a selection of all the assessed work across all modules which gave me confidence in my evaluation of the standard of student assessment.

I would have liked to see a breakdown of marks for different coursework components, as for one or two modules the range of total marks were quite narrow. I could then have checked that the range of marks for the individual components were more variable. Sometimes the marks could have been put on the feedback sheets to the students.

Where scripts were annotated with feedback comments or markers to feedback comments, I would have liked to see the annotations in the margins and not covering the text, which made the assessments harder to read. Feedback made using this method seemed in general to be briefer and not as easy to follow as that given in modules that provided feedback on a separate sheet.

In one or two cases I could not gain access to the coursework assessment to see what had been set as the material had been removed from the VLE.

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

As stated above the choice of subjects, methods and standards of assessment for dissertations were excellent.

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 whole process was well organised and I am grateful to _____ and _____ for the time and effort they put into providing everything I needed in advance or on the day of the two Boards I attended. I was satisfied with the recommendations of the Exam Board.

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

Yes

Other comments

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

This is a well-organised programme delivered by an enthusiastic team. The programme is strong, interesting and innovative, and equips students with up to date modern methods that will stand them in good stead in their future careers.

The range of assessment methods is very good and provides students with different ways in which to express their learning.

There is some room for improvement in terms of feedback on some modules, where it was a little brief.

I would suggest swapping the titles of Advanced Epidemiology and Advanced Modelling as the content of each seemed better suited to the title of the other.

The programme team might consider seeking accreditation from the Royal Statistical Society, or at least entering into discussion about it, as I appreciate the programme may not quite fit into the current remit for accreditation by the society.

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



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26th February 2015

Dear <>

External Examiner's report for Epidemiology and Biostatistics 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. First, let me welcome you to your role and thank you for assembling the 2013-14 report for the programmes in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. This is your first report for this programme.

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. You report that you were given comprehensive access to student work and assessments but noted that this access could improve.

Programme Leader's response

I have enclosed with this letter a response assembled by <>, Programme Leader. <> addresses the points made about access to work and marking sheets. I can confirm that as Director of Postgraduate Studies, I have received proposals to amend three modules and these have been scrutinised by our quality assurance processes and approved.

Research influence

You note that the programme includes research influenced components. In particular, the dissertations contained high-level research-led material.

Thank you so much for your report as External Examiner. Your contributions to the Epidemiology and Biostatistics programme are much valued.

Yours sincerely

<>

<>

Enc: <> 18 December 2014

Director of Postgraduate Studies
<>



Room Worsley Building
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

18/12/2014

Dear ,

Re: Response to External Examiner's Report (Academic Year 2013– 2014)

I write in response to report on the MSc in Epidemiology & Biostatistics for which I am programme leader.

The teaching team was delighted with helpful and positive response in r first year as external examiner. In particular, her affirmation that *"the programme is strong, interesting and innovative, and equips students with up to date modern methods that will stand them in good stead in their future careers"* and that *"the dissertations included high level research-led material which was linked to tutors research interests and covered a wide variety of topics"*. confirms that this is *"a well-organised programme delivered by an enthusiastic team"*.

Although did not raise any matters for urgent attention, a number of issues were described in the body of report. These issues have been discussed by the teaching team, and the following strategies put in place to address them:

- a. *"I was provided with the previous External Examiner's report for 2012/13. I was not provided with the response of the School"*
The 2012/13 response will be forwarded to to assist in understanding the development of the programme.
- b. *"Where marks seemed to be a little low for one new module this was already being addressed by the course team"*
This relates to module EPIB3036 which was delivered for the first time in 2013/14. The issues have been discussed with the module team and changes are being put forward for approval to the content, delivery and assessments for this module.
- c. *"Some students struggled with interpretation of results and may improve their performance by being encouraged to write coursework results up in a standard reporting format for certain more statistical modules"*
The use of standard reporting formats will be considered, especially in module EPIB5023 where these skills are first introduced.
- d. *"I would have liked to see a breakdown of marks for different coursework components (for each module)"*
A breakdown of marks for each component of assessment for each module will be provided to the external examiner in 2014/15.
- e. *"(feedback provided by annotating scripts was) in general briefer and not as easy to follow as that given in modules that provided feedback on a separate sheet."*
The use of feedback sheets will be considered in modules that do not currently include them.
- f. *"In one or two cases I could not gain access to the coursework assessment to see what had been set as the material had been removed from the VLE."*
Material will not be removed from VLE module areas until after the committee of examiners.
- g. *"I would suggest swapping the titles of Advanced Epidemiology and Advanced Modelling as the content of each seemed better suited to the title of the other."*
New module titles will be put forward for approval for EPIB5026 and 5027.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor in Biostatistics
Programme Leader – MSc in Epidemiology & Biostatistics