

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

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

Faculty / School of:	School of Psychology, Faculty of Medicine and Health
Subject(s):	<i>Psychology</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	<i>BSc Psychology and its international and industrial variants and BSc Psychology (intercalated programme) and all Year 2 and 3 ug modules</i>
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

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

None

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

I began my term as UG external examiner at a point of transition in the School where a new Head of School and Director of Teaching had recently taken up their posts. As such, I was able to witness continuity in the quality of the scheme, its assessment and the appropriateness of the awards achieved by student, while at the same time, this was also a period in which a number of important enhancements occurred, especially with respect to developing a strategic overview of assessment matters, including close consideration of matters relating to comparability of value and consistency of quality across the commendable variety of assessment tools and modules that the School offers to its students. I found the School to be enthusiastically responsive to my feedback on such matters and was always encouraged to see the rigour with which enhancements were put in place, including a review of the relative contribution of module components across the final year and the development of internal peer review processes for the production of examination papers

Standards

- 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 degrees offered by the School embody all the ILOs one would expect of a high quality honours programme, relating both to core and specialist knowledge as well as relevant skills, both discipline-related and generic. The courses and assessments are pitched at an appropriately discriminating level for the award of BSc.

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.*

All the core curricular areas – as stipulated by the British Psychological Society, and as one would expect to find in comparable institutions - are covered in the programme. At honours level there are also a broad range of specialist modules informed by contemporary research, including that being conducted by the members of staff delivering the modules. This is precisely what one would expect from a research active School.

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 School utilises a commendable variety of assessment methods in examinations and coursework, including seen and unseen examination essays, multiple choice questions, coursework essays, laboratory reports, literature review, research proposals and oral presentations. In response to previous years' feedback from me, the School has established processes for the strategic oversight of all these components and so is in a strong position to ensure the quality and comparability of the assessments undertaken by students. Arrangements for marking all seem appropriate, with clearly documented moderation (and blind second marking for some components) processes in place. Processes for award classification are also clearly documented and appropriately implemented, including careful consideration of all borderline cases as well as thorough evaluation of the impact of any extenuating circumstances.

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 performance of the cohort is as one would expect given the nature of the intake and with respect to comparable institutions. The various assessments and marking criteria allow for clear discrimination amongst the cohort with respect to the students' achievements. I think it would be worth the School giving some consideration to lower and upper ends of the marking scale. For the former, my view is that it could be amended to reflect the gradation amongst the - admittedly few and far between – instances of work falling below the passing standard. At the upper end, I read some really outstanding pieces of work from students and I think the School could give consideration to whether the full upper reaches of the marking scale (probably from high 2.1 upwards) is being utilised in order to reward such achievements.

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.

As already mentioned, the School has put in place a range of processes for quality assurance, comparability, and peer review that will help to ensure the quality and appropriateness of assessment on the scheme.

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 research undertaken by members of the School plays a significant role, both in the content of the modules being taught (especially in the final year) as well as in the practical opportunities available to students, especially in their final year research projects, but also in other aspects of assessments, such as the research protocol on one of the modules and broader research-related skills (e.g., dissemination via oral presentations) in several of the modules.

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

This was all in order – I had the opportunity to spend considerable time with the new incoming external examiner in order to get her up to speed. The School Manager (<=>) was also on hand in order to support this 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.

Provision of information was efficient and comprehensive. All the necessary materials were made available in electronic or hard copy as appropriate, and all in a timely fashion. I was able to liaise readily with the School Manager and her team and all my queries and comments were dealt with promptly and appropriately.

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.

I had access to all the necessary documentation, including access to all the relevant information on the School's web pages.

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?

All coursework and examination questions were provided to me, and while I had several comments and queries, they were all responded to promptly and appropriately.

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 throughout the year and on my visit to the School with an appropriate selection of modules, assessment formats and mark range in order to confirm the appropriateness of the evaluation. All the assignments were appropriately documented, including where relevant, feedback forms, comments, etc.

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

Project topics covered the range of areas of research activity and expertise within the Institute, providing students with the opportunity to receive expert supervision. All the processes for assessment are appropriate and fully documented.

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 arrangements were excellent; clearly a great deal of preparatory work had been done by relevant members of academic and support staff. I had plenty of opportunity to discuss matters with all relevant parties and was able to attend and speak to the Board of Examiners. It's clear that careful and thorough processes are in place for marking and moderation of assessed work. The Board of Examiners meeting itself was clearly accorded all the significance it warrants and staff in the School all took a serious and considered approach to the business, including extensive and careful consideration of borderline cases and mitigating circumstances.

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

The School has a bespoke subcommittee of the BoE to consider mitigating circumstances and it's clear that careful consideration is given to all available evidence before award recommendations are made.

Other comments

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

Institute of Psychological Sciences

University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

18 August 2015

Dear

External Examining Report 2014/15

Many thanks for your report and I apologise for the delay in responding. On behalf of all the staff here I would like to thank you for your thorough and valued contribution to our examining processes over the past four years. Both my predecessor, and I have found your input extremely helpful. The positive aspects of our work to which you allude have undoubtedly been enhanced by your constructive feedback along the way.

We used our recent School away day as an opportunity to consider the comments from both you and about utilising the full range of marks, particularly at the top of the marking scale. We did not arrive at any concrete solutions, but came to the conclusion that there would be merit in taking these discussions further. We were mindful of the fact that the University is currently conducting a wider review of the classification scheme, and it is possible that our thinking about the design of our marking scale will be affected by that review. One idea we had was to produce more points in the first class category to give markers more flexibility in awarding the higher grades (e.g. we could introduce 72, 75, 78 etc. vs 74, 80, 86 etc.). Another possibility was to resort to a more traditional 0-100 scale for individual pieces of work. However, whatever is decided, we will certainly take your comments on board and agree that there is scope for greater recognition of good work by increasing the number of higher grades that are awarded.

We look forward to our further opportunity to interact with you via Skype on 9 September. will be in touch with the usual information in advance.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer.

Yours sincerely

Head of School

cc: Quality Assurance Team