

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:	Education
Subject(s):	<i>Humanities – History and Geography</i>
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?

No – but there had not been History and Geography PGCE courses and this was a 1 year appointment.

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 (Masters) and Professional Graduate levels. Those standards required for the award of QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) are also appropriate.

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 that are known to me.

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.

I have scrutinised a number of written assignments from modules EDUC5159M and EDUC5150 – both Geography and History assignments. I also had the pleasure of observing 4 trainees teaching and partaking in the professional dialogue that followed between the trainee the mentor and myself. In addition I have scrutinised teaching files and e-profiles. I met with a group of 7 further students from History Geography and also English. Plus, I was also afforded opportunities to talk with the tutors for History and Geography as well as with the Course Leader. From all of this evidence I am able to conclude that –

- a) The design and structure of the assessment methods is rigorous and appropriate. The marking of assignments was accurate and the feedback from the marking tutors to students modelled the best of practice. The tutors should be commended for the level and detailed nature of the feedback provided. The feedback from school based colleagues was also in line with expected levels. Formative assessment of students I judged to be helpful and appropriate in all cases that I examined and summative judgements are in line with other PGCE courses.
- b) The course is well structured, administered and that assessment procedures are rigorous and absolutely in line with other, similar courses.

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 writing and the professional practice of the students is minimally of a good standard and in a number of cases is outstanding. A couple of assignments that I looked at fell beneath the level for Masters accreditation – this confirmed the marks awarded and the comments provided by the tutors and second markers. Thus the range of attainment is commensurate with that found on other PGCE courses. The very best students are genuinely outstanding and from the evidence provided all of the beginning teachers who have been through the History and Geography programmes will be good beginning teachers.

I observed four of the trainees teaching (2 historians and 2 geographers). I concur with the judgements made by school-based colleagues and by their university tutors in relation to each of these beginning teachers. All are grade 1 standard and one of the students observed has all of the hallmarks of being truly 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.

N/A

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 design of the History and Geography courses is well informed by research work. An impressive feature of the tutors that I spoke to (particularly recently 'retired' colleagues from schools) was the clear emphases on current and recent work in schools being placed alongside up-to-date research. Good use had been made of professional journal literature as well as works from peer-reviewed journals.

The students were engaged in small-scale action-based research which in general was well handled. Here I would advise the shaping of tighter research questions and being slightly less ambitious in the scope of the investigations. Whilst in most cases ethical issues had been dealt with very well there were a couple of examples where anonymity needed to be further addressed (it was highlighted by the marking tutors).

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 External Examiner's Handbook was very helpful and also the other correspondence about duties and responsibilities were sent to me well in advance of the period of external examining. I would also like to thank the secretarial and administration staff who have been extremely courteous and informative in answering any further questions.

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.

All appropriate documentation was received well in advance and was also made available electronically. Access to the e-portfolios and also the student pen-portraits was very helpful. This information enabled me to quickly establish where colleagues' thinking was in relation to where the strengths and development needs of the beginning teachers were. I am aware of the time consuming nature of such work and would like to thank the tutors for the preparation and high levels of detail in this documentation. Talking with colleagues whilst travelling to visit students in school placements further exemplified and added to the pen portraits.

The schedule of visits to schools was clear and took account of the need to meet with a range of people – not just the student teacher and the mentor. Again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the schools and colleagues for giving

of their time so freely.

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. A range of scripts from History, Geography and EPS were received alongside access to e-portfolios/profiles. Students and school colleagues made available the necessary paperwork in schools for me to be able to determine that standards reached and marks awarded were accurate.

In relation to the assignments the standard of marking was very good and largely consistent. Where there were differences between first and second markers it was clear as to how the mark awarded had been arrived at. I complement the level of tracked changes feedback – the students remarked that they found this very helpful and informative. Because I am from an history background it was slightly easier for me to see that appropriate reference to literature had been made in order to push forward the thinking of the student. I am also convinced, talking with other students for Geography that this was also the case.

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?

YES. The whole process, including the operation of the exam board, was exemplary. Where necessary individual judgements were appropriately discussed and I agreed with all of the decisions and recommendations that were made.

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

Yes. Discussions at the Exam Board were entirely appropriate and I was convinced that where there were mitigating circumstances these were discussed and resolved in a fair and just way.

Other comments

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

The external examining process has revealed a very good course that is well structured and run extremely efficiently. The trainee teachers seemed very well prepared and communicated with real gratitude about the level of help and support they had received from their university tutors and colleagues in school. Without exception all of the students that I met and talked with had a very good understanding of the demands that will be placed upon them in schools and all of them were very much looking forward to starting their teaching careers.

As things currently stand the History and Geography courses will not be continued to be offered by the University – this is a real shame but is understandable given recent circumstances. So the following points are made in the hope that the course will soon be back and running and providing high quality beginning History and Geography teachers for local schools and beyond. It is also hoped that some of the points raised below may be considered more generically within the ITE courses offered by the University.

- Do continue to develop the highly supportive environments both within the university and more particularly in schools. The development of regional mentor training sessions has helped but I would also encourage the university to see the need for whole mentor development sessions – this often provides high quality CPD for mentors and enables them to see that they are part of a wider community.
- The level of support in schools was of a very high standard and universally school colleagues valued the partnership with the University of Leeds. In one or two cases there was an occasional tendency for mentors to remain focused on classroom management issues in their feedback to trainees. Whilst it is important that effective learning environments are established and maintained, beginning teachers need further input around pedagogical choices, developing understanding across a series of lessons and thinking about the subject specificity of their lessons. Mentor development sessions may help as might doing more paired observations in schools or teaming up with colleagues

from another school.

- All of the students whom I had the pleasure of talking with immediately raised the grades of the lessons they had been awarded. To some extent it was the case that the grade awarded was all pervasive. They didn't see beyond it and if poorly judged then there was little to be learnt. I raise the question of whether the grading of lesson is helpful/desirable in terms of student teachers' development. I am well aware that there is a divided camp in relation to this issue but I think there should be a wider discussion with school colleagues.
- In relation to lesson planning, I thought there needed to be a more emphasis on the rationale for the lesson and thinking about how this might be effectively communicated to pupils. Whilst many lesson plans that I looked at did use key enquiry questions it was a little harder to see how effective questioning in the lesson built towards answering overarching questions.
- It was clear to me that by the end of the examining process that the e-portfolios were a useful document. However, I question the level of evidence that has to be provided to ensure that the student teacher is deemed to have met the necessary standards. I also think it is the case that they full potential of the document is not being realised – either in the sense of personal reflection by the student nor in the sense of professional dialogue with mentors, tutors and fellow beginning teachers.
- The structure of the assignments is very good and I was delighted to see the level of critical engagement with literature. I would also praise the use of subject specific literature. A very clear indication that the students had been well taught and advised. There was universal praise for the university subject based sessions.

It has been a pleasure to examine this course for just one year and to see the high levels of professionalism and expertise amongst colleagues at the University and within schools. The profession needs ITE courses like the History and Geography courses at Leeds and the sooner they are 'reinstated' the better served the profession will be.

Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

7 September 2015

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 future geography and history courses and more widely across our provision.

We were delighted with your very encouraging observations on a number of dimensions of the Secondary PGCE: the accuracy of marking and high quality of tutors' and school-based colleagues' feedback; evidence of liaison between first and second markers; the outstanding teaching of the trainees you observed; the design of the geography and history courses and the research and recent in-school experience of the tutors which informed them; the quality of support provided by administrative support colleagues; the comprehensive information provided on the courses and on trainees to be visited in schools; the organisation of school visits and the friendly cooperation of school-based colleagues.

We were delighted that you found the examining process and the conduct of the Board of Examiners "exemplary". Your very complimentary comments on our course and how it is run and how well trainees feel they are taught and prepared for teaching, give us great encouragement for the future. Over recent years in particular, we have worked very hard to consolidate the Partnership. We are very pleased that you note that our school colleagues value this relationship.

We are also very grateful for your identification of areas which would benefit from some attention.

We are always looking for ways to improve our mentor training and will consider carefully your suggestion to offer sessions for the totality of our mentor population, in addition to our cluster and bespoke provision. We appreciate the CPD benefits and value in establishing the feeling of membership of a wider mentoring community. Your comments on the focus of some mentors' feedback and the benefits of more paired observations will be added to the agenda for our next team meeting.

In our early EPS sessions and subject method sessions each year, we give special attention to lesson planning. We will adjust our teaching to ensure the focus on the rationale for lessons and how this is communicated to pupils.

In our Secondary PGCE team meetings in the autumn we will certainly address the issue of tighter research questions and anonymity in relation to the EPS 2 assignment.

Your thoughts on the eProfile are timely, given that we are conducting a comprehensive review of it in the course of this academic year. The level of evidence trainees provide and how the eProfile should be exploited as a tool for personal reflection and interaction with mentors, tutors and fellow trainees, are important issues which will certainly be discussed by all stakeholders.

We appreciate enormously the time, effort and consideration you have given to this extremely helpful report, as well as your very positive contribution during the course of your visit in May and again in June.

We hope very much that our geography and history provision will be up and running again in 2016-17 and would be delighted if you would consider acting as our external examiner.

With sincere thanks and best wishes

Head of School of Education