

**The University of Leeds**  
**EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

**Part A: General Information**

**Subject area and awards being examined**

Institute of Psychological Sciences
<i>Psychology – see modules below.</i>
Programme: MSc/PGDip Psychological Approaches to Health. <i>Modules: PSYC 5310M; PSYC 5320M; PSYC 5600M; PSYC 5611M; PSYC 5620M; PSYC5632M; PSYC 5642M; PSYC 5651M; PSYC 5670M</i>
Sc/PGDip Psychological Approaches to health.

**Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner  
Completed report**

**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](mailto: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*

***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?*

***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*

My experiences of this programme have been extremely positive across my 4 year term as external examiner. The teaching and learning provision is of a high standard. There are a wide range of assessment methods and the assessment processes are rigorous. There are a good range of final marks and these clearly map on to the standard of work provided by the various students. I have raised a few minor issues in my feedback over the years and have always found the programme to very responsive to this feedback.

## 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 ILO's are appropriate. The students are presented with a broad range of topics from experts in the field. The content and standard of the work is 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 level of work presented is equivalent to other national M level programmes in Psychology and Health. However the structure of the programme is relatively unique as it is not a BPS stage I accredited MSc in health psychology where the course content is more tightly prescribed.

### 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 course includes a wide range of relevant assessments including assignments based on problem based learning, qualitative and quantitative research analyses, critical appraisal, systematic review, essays, and exams. The students also complete a research dissertation and these cover a wide range of topics and research methodologies. The teaching appears to be of a high quality and the expectations of the assignments are in line with this.

The award classifications were commensurate with the level of the students' 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.*

The broad range of assignments gave the students the opportunity to learn a wide range of new process skills as well as assess their critical thinking skills and knowledge of the subject areas.

The performance of the students was equivalent to similar courses. The students receiving distinctions produce excellent quality work worthy of these grades. There is possibly a greater spread of marks towards the lower end than some other courses which possibly reflects the fact this is a large cohort of students for a MSc in health and as it is not an BPS accredited health psychology course, the entrance criteria are less stringent.

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

### 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.*

Areas of notable good practice

1. A very detailed dissertation (research project) handbook that guides students through the expectations of the project.
2. Use of self-assessment alongside lecturer feedback for assignments
3. PSYC5642M Food and Health provides innovative problem based learning and very clear overviews of these assignments
4. PSYC5651M (Psychology of Patient Safety) excellent example of a group assignment and problem based learning
5. Clear information is now provide as to the second marking process and how marks are adjusted if deemed necessary.

### 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 curriculum is delivered by research active members of staff. The lectures use their knowledge of the empirical literature to inform the content of their modules and build students' knowledge of research methods and ability to critically appraise research. Students also undertake research in the form of a research dissertation. The dissertations cover a wide range of topics which reflect the research expertise of the team of lecturers. The dissertations are of a high quality and students are given an impressive handbook to guide them through the research process.

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

#### 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

#### 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.*

I received detailed information. My questions were always answered promptly. The course administrator, <>, is to be commended on all her hard work in this regard.

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 – as above

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 all draft examination papers. The level of the questions was appropriate.

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 received sufficient work in well organised packages. Most of this was very clear and the students received good, clear feedback from markers. There were occasional examples where the nature of the assignment could have been more clearly articulated or where the final mark was only recorded on the spreadsheet rather than the marking sheet.

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

The choice of dissertation topics was appropriate. There was a wide range of interesting topics and methodologies. Projects that received distinction grades were very impressive pieces of work.

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 to all

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

Yes – very thoroughly done.

#### Other comments

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

This is a very well run MSc. Students cover a wide range of topics. The assessment procedures allow them develop a number of key transferrable research skills.

A number of academic staff members contribute to the programme many of whom have large active research programmes. The department is to be congratulated on running a well organised and interesting MSc degree

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

16 December 2015

Dear

**MSc Psychological Approaches to Health – External Examiner’s Report – 2014/2015**

Many thanks for taking the time to come to Leeds on 3–4<sup>th</sup> November and for acting as our external examiner for MSc PATH for the final time. Thank you also for the constructive feedback you have given us on the course, assessments and procedures. We will take this on board and ensure we implement any improvements as we move forward.

We are pleased that your experience of acting as our external examiner over the last 4 years has been very positive and that you have always found us responsive to your feedback. We note that you are happy with the organisation/administration, standards of teaching and the wide range of assessment on this Masters course.

We are pleased that you found the performance of our Masters students to be equivalent to that of students on similar courses and that the students receiving distinctions produce excellent quality work that is worthy of this grade. However, once again, we note that you have highlighted a greater spread of marks towards the lower end of the marking scale than perhaps might be expected on a top level course. As you suggest, this may well reflect the fact that this is a large cohort of students for an MSc in health, that the course is not BPS accredited, or possibly because we have less stringent entry criteria. With regard to the latter, by 2017 we intend to increase the entry requirements for PATH to bring them in line with those of our new MPsync programme.

Thank you once again for your time and helpful feedback, both this year and over the last 4 years. It has always been a pleasure to host you in your role as our external examiner for PATH. You have been a great asset to our Exam Board, and your input has been invaluable in maintaining our standards with Masters teaching.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Head of School