

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:	Faculty of Medicine and Health / School of Dentistry
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MChD/BChD Dental Surgery, BSc Oral Science Health and Health Promotion Introduction to the Oral Environment Oral Disease, Defence and Repair 1 Anxiety and Pain Management Personal and Professional Development 1/ Induction Clinical Practice 1
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MChD (after 5 years)

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 matters require urgent attention

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

Over the period of my appointment I have had the clear sense that I have been part of a team lending an external perspective, not an encumbrance or policeman. I have been included in all relevant matters and encouraged to contribute at any level I was presumptuous enough to feel able to. Everyone has been thoroughly informative and transparent and anything of value I could contribute (and was not bound down by supra-institutional processes) has been acted on. There is a culture of excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. Unfortunately this virtuous community is subject to overwork and attrition by circumstance and further improvements are impeded as I will outline elsewhere.
I have seen clear evidence that the procedures of the School are appropriate and that the greatest of efforts are made to develop improve and enhance them with each academic cycle.

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.*

In the context of the parallel modular programmes examined the aims and learning outcomes were this year and in the past entirely appropriate, laying the foundations for succeeding years.

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.*

Essential core outcomes for a Dental qualification are provided by the national regulator (the General Dental Council in the UK and Ireland). Learning outcomes examined in the modules under consideration were all comparable to those in use by other UK institutions teaching dentistry. The Leeds course has been inspected and found sufficient by the General Dental Council. The overall quality of the candidates was in line with my expectations from observations of coequal-level candidates at similar UK institutions.

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.*

Mixed modes of assessment were used within modules, to provide a broad assessment of the candidates. This breadth of assessment together with the modular course design has by necessity (because of university stipulations linking assessment to module credits) demanded a large number of separate assessment events within the course. In previous reports I have noted that marking these assessments in the highly rigorous manner that had obviously been carried out, is a very significant task in terms of staff time and effort. I must again point to the high workload the staff continues to cope with in assessment. Whilst I can confirm that the programme operates to the highest national standard, in other comparable institutions, non-modular courses and modular organisations administered in more innovative ways achieve the same ends without such a toll on staff (and on students!).

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.*

As I have stated in previous reports the achievements of the students in written examinations of multiple formats are comparable in quality to the overall standard of similar programmes in other UK higher education institutions. There was some evidence of a culture of "question spotting" within the cohort. This is and has been in the past a common phenomenon elsewhere, however now social media may be contributing to and intensifying it. There were an appreciable number of candidates left to resist portions of year one. This again is something seen at all UK dental schools, and despite the assertions of some is NOT a new phenomenon. The A-level- University transition in clinical subjects has been a "wake-up call" for decades.

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

Clinical Practice 1 module had been taught and assessed in appropriate styles. There was formative continuous assessment (followed by a sign off meeting), Online clinical induction materials and Basic Life Support training Certification as well as summative examination using Clinical Scenarios. For the level this is consistent and appropriate..

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.

Over the time I have been external examiner curriculum mapping and examinations blueprinting (to align with GDC "Preparing For Practice" outcomes for registration) have become well-established. Appropriate standard setting has also become universally employed (where the assessment mode permits). This is in line with best practice. I fear however that however diligently further improvements are sought diminishing returns will be obtained. Unless some freedom of manoeuvre in assessment administration (in terms for instance of improving assessment alignment to outcomes / removal of redundancy) and aggregation of (eg multiple choice) examinations is permitted further improvement will be stymied. Other similar institutions do not shackle assessments to fixed duration modules, instead permitting an entire academic year to be deemed to a module. The assessments can then be carried out flexibly at the most effective / efficient time. Other dental schools eschew modular architecture entirely.

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.

Active researchers are involved In the first three years of these courses. Critical thinking and scholarship are fostered by the curriculum design and manner of assessment.

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

I have been a mentor for one (now well established) external examiner and shall for a time continue to be a mentor for another incoming external examiner. Succession planning seems to have been thought through well. I received unobtrusive and appropriate advice as to how best fulfil a mentors role My mentee and I were encouraged to get in early contact to discuss

The role and remit of an external examiner

Preparing for BoE meetings and local manifestations of "due diligence"

Current issues in higher education and the discipline

Key dates in the examining cycle

Writing formal EE reports given the audiences that reports attract

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 had access throughout to all appropriate policy and position documentation. The assessment processes were transparent, rigorous and fair at all times. I was always given access to all relevant material.

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 relevant documentation was made available..

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?

Questions were of an appropriate level and character. Any changes I suggested were acted on.

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?

An appropriate amount of work was available for inspection, and any reasonable request for further and better particulars was promptly acted upon and delivered.

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

No dissertations involved as such. Project work and reports were all well thought out, appropriate and appropriately assessed.

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?

All administrative arrangements superlatively co-ordinated. The BoE has become more efficient with each iteration I have witnessed. I attended the meeting this year and was happy with all decisions.

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

I attended the meetings conducted to deal with these matters and was satisfied that due consideration was given to all cases presented.

Other comments

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

The school should be mindful of cross compensation issues where a regulatory learning outcome is assessed in a module alongside other outcomes that may not be so close to the regulators heart lest the possibility come to pass that an eclipse of the regulatory stipulation is observed.

All concerned in the processes I observed were striving to maintain the highest standards under time and resource pressures that may not be sustainable in the medium term....

Last year in my report I commented-

May I suggest thought is given on probable future challenges such as-

The volume of work that must be assessed under the current scheme is high compared to other institutions.. There is only limited scope to increase efficiency in manpower terms when using essays and short answer questions in high stakes examinations.

It may reduce workloads overall if the modular format was elastic enough to allow assessments to be grouped so that multiple choice exams were taken in fewer larger chunks. This would also help with statistical exam performance analysis. Rationalisation of the number of written assessments (possibly by course element mergers) could also reduce marking workloads a little.

Assessment of "group work" (eg Health and Health Promotion in first year) needs especial attention to ensure there is no possibility of advantage or disadvantage being given to candidates by the architecture of the assessment. "Group Work" may also attract scrutiny in GDC inspections when there may be questions regarding QA measures to ensure candidates cannot "slipstream" learning outcomes assisted by stronger team members.

Much thought has been given to my comments. Freedom of action to deal with them expeditiously seems however to be in short supply

MChD .

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

18 December 2015

Dear

Thank you for your External Examiner's report for Year 1 of the MChD/BChD, BSc programme for 2014-15.

We are pleased that you find that there is a culture of excellence in learning, teaching and assessment at the School of Dentistry in Leeds and that you find the procedures of the school are appropriate and subject to continual development and enhancement.

We are reassured that you have felt included in all relevant matters, encouraged to contribute at any level, and that we have been transparent and informative.

We welcome your comments regarding the number of candidates required to re-sit portions of the year 1 assessments and that this is in line with what is seen at all UK dental schools. We will continue to support those students with their assessments and transition in the clinical and academic programme.

We note your observation that, due to University stipulations requiring a linkage of assessment to module credits, a large number of assessment events are required within this level of the programme and that this results in a significantly high workload for staff to maintain the rigour and standard of assessment. Your observation is that the volume of work in this regard is high compared to other institutions. You mention that comparable institutions achieve the same ends without such a toll on staff or students and that other dental schools eschew modular architecture entirely. You suggest that, without freedom of manoeuvre in the administration of assessment, further improvement will be stymied. You recommend considering a rationalisation of assessments, perhaps, for example, with grouping of multiple choice examinations and merging of course elements to help reduce marking workloads a little. We will look carefully at these suggestions.

You also note that assessment of group work needs special attention to ensure there is no possibility of advantage or disadvantage given to candidates by the architecture of the assessment. We will take on board your comments and suggestions in this respect.

We are pleased that you have found succession planning for external examiners to be well thought through and grateful for your mentorship of an incoming external examiner.

We would like to offer our most sincere thanks for your invaluable contribution to our processes. Your observations, advice and input during your term as an External Examiner for us have been insightful, sensible and of great assistance. We hope to work with you again in the future and wish you the very best.

Yours sincerely,

Dean of the School of Dentistry