

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 Healthcare
Subject(s):	<i>Social Work</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	HECS 1115, HECS 1114, HECS 2208, HECS 2212, HECS 3254, HECS 3153, HECS 3211 and HECS 3029
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA (Hons.) Social Work, MA Social Work

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

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 have received copies of the External Examiners' module reports, but have not received previous end of year EE's reports.

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.*

The assessment methods continue to be robust and test students' achievements of the learning outcomes using a variety of methods. The programme is structured to meet the professional criteria for the social work role. The internal examiners provided consistently detailed and constructive feedback to the students, and the level of the marks was generally appropriate and consistent. It was easily apparent from the feedback to see where students had lost marks.

The distribution of marks between modules appears consistent and the overall assessment process appears to have been administered fairly and appropriately.

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 sample of assignments I read are broadly comparable to those produced by social workers undertaking graduate programmes elsewhere in the UK. The evidence produced by the students in support of their professional competence is reflected in the benchmark requirements set down by the QAA.

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 assessment procedures have been carried out in accordance with the module ILOs and regulations. Internal moderation has been completed appropriately.

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 level of performance of the cohort of students I have sampled has shown on average a good level of performance and this compares well with other HEI's in which I have acted as External Examiner. Most of the assessed work I have looked at has been at the middle to high achievement level, with very few fails. The strengths of the student group is their ability to research their subject material and critically explore the issues under investigation.

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

I have seen a range of practice documents (portfolios) which demonstrate how the students are meeting the aims of the placement and the ILOs. I will attend the assessment board in Dec. 2015 and will meet with students, giving me the opportunities to explore the placement documentation and support of students in greater detail.

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 the first year I have acted as an External Examiner for this programme, so I am not in a position to comment on enhancements and developments from last year.

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.

As already comment on, the use of research is clearly evidenced in each module I have sampled. There is good evidence of practice being informed by research and the 'social work research project' module showed some excellent critical reflective writing using a large range of research material- with the majority of the students gaining very high marks .

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

NA

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.

I have received information from the School Healthcare (15.3.2015) giving information regarding the role and responsibilities of the External Examiner. This included a CD on the up to date information on the exam process. I have also received feedback from the programme leader in response to comments I have made regarding marking outcomes.

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?

Yes.

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.

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

Yes.

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?

I will be attending my first Exam Board in Dec. 2015 and be able to comment on the process after that time.

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

I understand that there are clear criteria to consider 'mit circs' and this includes a process to review the evidence presented by students.

Other comments

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

Baines Wing
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Direct line: 0113

E-mail:

8 February 2016

Dear

Re: External Examiner's Report –2014/2015 - MA Social Work and BA (Hons) Social Work

I should like, on behalf of the programme team, to thank you for your complimentary annual External Examiner's report for the aforementioned programmes.

I am pleased to note your positive comments on the variety of assessment methods, the quality of feedback given to students and recognition of the student's ability to research topics and write critically.

I note that you have seen documentation of student achievement in placement practice.

I am pleased to learn that your relationships with both administrative staff and programme leaders are good.

The team will ensure that earlier external examiners' reports are forwarded to you.

The team greatly appreciates your involvement with the programmes and your efficient turnaround of documentation and looks forward to a continued productive relationship in the current session.

Yours sincerely,

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 Healthcare
Subject(s):	<i>Social Work</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Social Work MA Social Wok
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA and MA

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

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Academic Quality and Standards Team
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

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.*

Both the BA and MA programmes meet external requirements for a programme leading to a social work qualification and professional registration. The team have worked hard to maintain, further develop and implement an imaginative and stretching curriculum relevant to attaining these.

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.*

Aims and ILOs are prepared against external benchmarks and the standards achieved by students, as I have seen them so far, are, at least, on a par with what I see or have seen on other undergraduate and postgraduate social work qualifying programmes.

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.*

From the evidence of assessed assignments which I have reviewed, the quality of University teaching appears to be strong. The variety of assessment mechanisms, which provide learning opportunities in their own right, appears to be replicated in the range of teaching and learning approaches deployed.

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 is always the case, the standard of student performance is variable. The most highly rated assessments reveal very strong abilities to achieve understanding and the capacity to evaluate and critique. The lower marked assignments revealed gaps in required knowledge, were poor in analysis and structure and often exposed weaknesses in basic literacy skills. It was apparent that the course team were aware of such learning issues, remedial facilities are available and possible underlying issues are addressed.

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

I have reviewed a sample of practice portfolios, attended Practice Assessment Panel and, of course, reviewed assignments within which practice placement drawn upon. In the light of this evidence, I am confident that the practice components of the programmes are developing the requisite knowledge, understanding, skills and values to meet registration requirements and produce effective newly qualified practitioners.

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.

Changes made to the programmes, as I have been made aware of them, are appropriate responses to a constantly changing practice environment.

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.

Students reveal in their assignments an appropriate knowledge of relevant research and undertake practice related research as a component in their assessment. They learn the importance of, and the skills to evaluate, research based evidence as a key underpinning for practice. Hopefully, in some cases, an interest has been stimulated which may lead in due course to an academic career.

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

8. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

Not applicable

The Examination/Assessment Process

9. 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.*

Necessary material is provided in documentary form. In addition, I found attendance at a Practice Assessment Panel and an opportunity to meet members of the programme team informally very helpful and instructive in understanding the philosophy, culture and administrative processes of the programmes.

10. 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 receive requisite documentation.

11. 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 received some drafts for comment; others were already in place and, I assume had received approval from previous or my colleague external. As indicated already, the range and nature of assessments are appropriate for meeting programme objectives, the stages of students' learning and particular subject areas under assessment.

12. 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 or was pointed towards an appropriate sample for each assignment. The majority were viewed on-line via Turnitin and had detailed in-text and overall comments. Using Turnitin, although a sample was suggested, I had access to the whole cohort and used this facility on occasions.

I provide specific feedback on each item of assessed work as they are marked throughout the year. I have received responses to my feedback, where I have raised issues on assignments, in the course of the session. A practice which I particularly value is that of markers providing a review in the MAB proforma of overall performance in an assessment. In my view, this is exemplary practice which I now recommend to other programmes.

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

The nature of the "dissertation" to research a topic, appraise the material gathered and then apply it critically to practice, is entirely appropriate for latter phase the programme and the students' stage of learning. It was apparent that students – through their teaching and research – had covered or had, at least, been exposed to much essential and relevant material and at a depth to be expected at the point of qualification. The good marks demonstrated adequate presentation and the capacity to structure and present an informed argument grounded in appropriate literature.

14. 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?

As noted above, I attended a both an Examination Board and a Practice Assessment Panel this year. Both were conducted efficiently and with due process.

I have felt on occasions that turn-around times for my reviewing, so that assessed work can be presented to the periodic MABs, are unreasonably tight.

Also, in the course of the year, I receive numerous spreadsheets for signing, the majority of which are not immediately connected to pieces of work to be reviewed and which I have to accept on trust – I feel slightly uncomfortable about this but am anxious not to disrupt the administration. However, I do think some brief explanation needs to be attached or, preferably, provision should be made for these admin 'catch-ups' to be dealt with completely internally. As matter of record, between July 2014 and March 2015, I faxed 52 spreadsheets to the admin team.

Administrative colleagues are unfailingly helpful.

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

See 14 above.

Other comments

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

Areas of particular strength in the programmes:

- The strong support for student learning among the University staff team reflected, for the most part, in the quality of feedback. Most feedback is comprehensive and should be helpful to the recipients, highlighting the key issues in academic content, construction and/or presentational aspects of individual submissions; however, a minority is overly brief and unstructured.
- An appropriately focussed and well organised curriculum.
- The variety of approaches deployed in both teaching and assessment which are both rigorous and developmental.
- The opportunity provided to myself as External Examiner to discuss issues with the course team when I attended the Exam Board and the Practice Assessment Panel. In relation to the panel itself, I was very impressed by the way that placement portfolios were quality assured and 'second marked' collaboratively by university staff and service users and carers. The panel also dealt with other practice and practice related business and exemplified well Leeds' good practice in involving service users in a meaningful way.
- As noted above, a practice which I particularly value is that of markers providing a review in the MAB proforma of overall performance in an assessment. In my view, this is exemplary practice which I now recommend to other programmes.

As noted in section 14 above, I do question appropriateness of the requirement for an external's signature on the multiplicity of 'catch-up' spreadsheets.

School of Healthcare

Baines Wing
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Direct line: 0113

E-mail:

8 February 2016

Dear

Re: External Examiner's Report –2014/2015 - MA Social Work and BA (Hons) Social Work

I should like, on behalf of the programme team, to thank you for your complimentary annual External Examiner's report for the aforementioned programmes.

I am pleased to note your positive comments on the quality of assessment and teaching.

The team is pleased that you have acknowledged the support it provides for students who are struggling whilst also pointing out the high achievement by some students.

It is reassuring to note that you are confident about the programmes' practice arrangements and pleasing that you found your visit to the Practice Assessment Panel to be so beneficial. Thank you for your positive comments on student achievement as well as student application of research knowledge.

I am pleased that you consider the administrative arrangements to be good and note your particularly complimentary comments about the MAB process as well as your contact with individual tutors.

Your concerns about the turnaround times and the number of forms that have to be signed have been noted and passed to the relevant people.

The team looks forward to a continued productive relationship with you in the current session and greatly appreciates your support for the programmes.

Yours sincerely,

Head of School of Healthcare



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE