

# 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):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Programmes: PGCE (Primary 5-9) QTS, PGCE (Primary 5-11) QTS, PGCE (Primary 7-11) QTS, PGCE Primary with QTS, 3-7 and 5-9 School Direct, PGCE Primary with QTS, 7-11 School Direct. Modules: EDUC3415: Foundation, EDUC5525M: EPS, EDUC5526M: English, EDUC5527M: Maths, EDUC5528M: Science, EDUC3420:TP
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCE (QTS)

#### 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](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Academic Quality and Standards**  
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*

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#### 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?*

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#### 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*



**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.*

I can confirm that the programme Aims, Intended Learning Outcomes and the standards expected and attained are commensurate with the level of this award.

**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.*

Based on the evidence made available to me I can corroborate that the Aims and LOs are broadly comparable to the outcomes and standards in PGCE programmes at similar ITT 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.*

The following comments are based on my review of thirty assignments and a sample of resit assignments in preparation for the resit board (students complete five, 3,000 word assignments in the programme period). It was particularly valuable to see a range of assignments as well as having access to all five assignments from a sample of six students. As requested last year, I was also able to view a selection of 'failed' assignments and 'borderline' assignments on the cusp of level 6 and level 7 awards. The accompanying data provided about number of grades and average marks was useful. A suitable proportion of assignments had been second marked and moderation had taken place. The generic mark sheet used across modules offered a very clear structure for markers to follow and the consistency of approach and overall quality of feedback was evident, and I am sure, very helpful to students. Targets identified for students were specific and it was evident that where students had acted on advice they had been able to improve their performance when completing the next assignment. Some markers used helpful sub-headings to structure comments and advice. Weaker assignments were characterised by inattention to the assignment guidance given in the module handbooks and in taught sessions.

I found the assignments were worthwhile with regards to supporting students' professional development and required students to be reflective. This was a common thread running through the core subject related modules where students were asked to reflect on children's misconceptions and progress. Assignments related closely to the directed tasks and attempted to enhance students' ability to synthesise theory and practice. Linking some assignments to national priority areas e.g. behaviour management, raised students' awareness of key issues and encouraged them to reflect on the effectiveness of strategies used in their own practice.

**Feedback from students:** the students I met spoke highly of the support tutors provide with assignment work and felt that the assessed assignments were manageable and useful. In particular students cited English and maths sessions and accompanying assignments as being especially helpful and relevant as they supported students in uniting theory and practice. Several students in the focus group described maths and science sessions as 'inspirational' and gave examples of how they had replicated ideas from sessions during their placements. They appreciated the strong focus on subject knowledge enhancement from initial audits to ongoing subject knowledge support.

**Suggestions for consideration:**

- The team noted during discussion that some students had failed to achieve masters level 7 (due to lack of critical appraisal, straying from assignment guidance and limited consideration of relevant research material) despite support with resubmissions and this repeats a similar pattern from last year. Changing some of the assignments to include a wider variety of assessment methods and some opportunities for an expanded word count (4,000 rather than 2,000 and 3,000 in current model) may offer students more time to produce the quality required for level 7 and may also reduce the marking workload of the small PGCE team.
- Students on the 3-7 PGCE programme seemed a little unclear about how to collate and analyse assessment evidence during placement and in preparation for the child development assignment. Further guidance on how observation and assessment inform planning and document pupil progress in the foundation stage and KS1 may need to be developed in related modules in the future.

**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.*

Students are assessed throughout the programme in a number of ways (formal essays which help to strengthen academic writing skills and school-based tasks which encourage students to reflect on theory and practice) and this regular formative feedback clearly has an impact on students' confidence and success. Students appreciated the purpose and value of school-based tasks (PDRs) but, despite the team's efforts to streamline these, some students felt that there were too many tasks and were not always clear about the detail and quality required in order to 'pass' this element. However, all the students I spoke to did appreciate the way that tasks helped them to evidence progress against the Standards and acted as a prompt to seek out a variety of experiences in each school setting. Students who had followed tutors' recommendations and created a portfolio showcasing task evidence were very happy with the resource they had created

and intended to use this at interviews and throughout their `NQT year. Students would have appreciated a condensed version of the tasks to share with class teachers so that timing and support could be negotiated.

Academic standards achieved are comparative with similar programmes and in line with my own departmental aims students do need encouragement to achieve greater depth in understanding by referencing original sources and journal articles and engaging in critical analysis (opposed to descriptive report writing) in level 7 assignments. Students achieving higher grades were able to synthesis theory and practice and referred to established and contemporary research to help them reflect on own practice. Students awarded lower marks often described and reported personal experience at the expense of critical evaluation and tended to rely on Internet searches and anecdotal evidence rather than expanding their literature review.

**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.*

Once again this year, students spoke highly of the support received and the opportunities for enhanced training that they had undertaken in partnership clusters. It is a shame that some of these clusters will be without University of Leeds students next year.

The improvements made to the school experience documentation, including using weekly review meetings to update progress against Standards and to reflect on specific target areas, has enabled mentors and trainees to feel very comfortable and confident about the grading process and in identifying next steps for development.

The rigorous approach to teaching and tracking English subject knowledge (particularly phonics, comprehension and SPAG) ensured students felt confident and well-supported.

Students were very appreciative of the professional and pastoral support tutors provide – particularly the core team who respond quickly to emails and offer tutorials throughout the year to support students with individual needs.

**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 undertake school-based tasks, which engage them in reflective thinking, designed to unite theory and practice. Many of the tasks are related to national priority areas (EAL, SEND, behaviour management, phonics and early reading) and provided valuable experience for students in different key stages as well as encouraging students to talk about changes in pedagogy and practice based on recent research and government initiatives. Tutors are enthusiastic about sharing their own research interests with students and ensuring that students keep abreast of local, national and international developments in pedagogy and practice.

Suggestion

When the PGCE assessment requirements are revised in 2016 it may be useful to include an inquiry-based assignment, which students can pursue, based on identification of a research topic (small scale action research) in their placement setting. Aspects of this are already evident in some students' work (in English and maths reflective reports).

**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**

**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.*

Yes – I had sufficient access to all the materials I needed and when I found it necessary to request additional information this was provided promptly.

**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.*

Yes – appropriate documentation has been provided.

**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?**

Modules are assessed by formative assignments rather than examinations on this programme.

**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?**

Yes – a sample of work was provided which presented a range of levels and allowed me to see the progress made across the year by six students. All scripts were marked using the agreed feedback proforma and marking criteria. Marking was thorough and detailed feedback was provided for students. The role of the second marker was evident and verification of marks had clearly been agreed. I agreed with resit / resubmission marks and recognised the amount of tutorial support available from tutor's to help students to be successful.

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

Students do not complete dissertations on this programme.

**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?**

Yes. The arrangements in place were thorough and professional. I was accompanied to school visits and meetings and appreciated the courtesy, hospitality and support afforded throughout the examination process. I visited a range of school settings and had time to talk to school mentors, class teachers and trainees. The examination period had been organised to allow time for both external examiners to talk to students and tutors and this was invaluable in gaining a better insight into the programme and recent improvements and developments. I was also able to talk to a student who had withdrawn from placement and 'failed' that element of the programme. I found the cause for concern and requires improvement process had been carried out and documented in a professional and supportive manner and the student was aware of her targets and options at every stage of the process.

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

Yes.

Other comments

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

As last year - I found this experience both enjoyable and valuable. Partnership teachers and University tutors were extremely welcoming and are clearly dedicated to supporting students and committed to the School of Education. One of the main strengths of the programme is the care, support and guidance afforded individuals who are struggling and need pastoral and professional guidance. The tracking system in place, which identifies emerging needs, allows a swift response to schools who need to support students working at grade 3 at any point during a placement. The weekly review meetings and ongoing involvement of personal tutors coupled with joint moderation visits continue to improve accuracy of assessment and the

partnership's ability to implement targeted intervention strategies when required to help students make effective changes to practice. Mentors reported that they were impressed with the support received from University tutors I noted that further training for mentors took place this year in order to highlight effective feedback, outline appropriate subject specific targets and to focus on improving consistency in grading and accuracy of assessment. Mentors were able to attend follow-up cluster training as well as University based partnership meetings. New mentors expressed interest in attending additional training aimed at inducting 'new' mentors or as part of a whole school mentoring process and this is something the team will be able to consider in 2015-16.

I found the students I met were committed, hardworking, professional and very positive about the programme. The students felt supported both on campus and during school experience placements. All the students I observed teaching were well prepared, competent and engaged their pupils in interesting, well-paced lessons. Students' files were well maintained, organised and provided evidence that students were encouraged to target personal areas of improvement (e.g. seeking more experience in teaching specific phonic phases by visiting other year groups). I was particularly impressed with the reflective and professional evaluations that students completed each week. These clearly reflect the proactive way students are tackling targets and responding to advice from mentors. School co-coordinators reported that the calibre of trainees on placement had been very good and the majority of students I met had already secured their first teaching post (often in a school cluster based on placement performance).

Points for consideration:

- I noted that the planning proformas advocated by the University were more KS2 friendly and perhaps needed some adjustments to suit the common approach to continuous provision, free-flow play and focus groups implemented in most FS and KS1 settings. This is clearly under review as the PGCE 3-7 course develops and will provide opportunities to make links to the Characteristics of Effective Learning which underpins pedagogy in the Foundation Stage. Similarly, focussed sessions on the transition from FS to KS1 would be valuable for 3-7 trainees.
- The observation feedback form was praised by trainees and mentors who found the grading approach and the prompts for specific feedback very helpful. Some of the box headings e.g. marking of pupils' work could be re-phrased for PGCE 3-7 trainees. Perhaps an additional section, which required mentors to comment on progress, related to a trainee's previous targets would be helpful.
- Consider creating one grading against Standards booklet (per placement) that can be highlighted as each placement progresses instead of one per week / observation. This could still be reviewed at your established key points when interim grades are collated.
- Class teachers I met said that they would like a brief overview document summarising PDR tasks and suggested timeframe for completion as they were keen to support students and to release them to visit other year groups in the earlier weeks of a placement.

21 September 2015

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Dear <<>>

Thank you for your helpful and supportive report. We are pleased that you recognise a number of positive aspects of our Primary PGCE programmes, for example, the relevance of the essay assignments to the students' professional development. It was particularly pleasing to read that you had noted the strength of the English and mathematics modules and their contribution to supporting students' professional practice. The comments that you make about the improvements made to the school experience documentation are most welcome. We are delighted that you found our students to be '*committed, hardworking, professional and very positive about the programme*'.

We haven't implemented any changes to the style of assignments for 2015-16. We were fully occupied with our re-inspection last year and it is now too late to implement changes. However, we have already agreed to diversify the style of assignments for 2016-17 and are in the process of implementing these changes. The main change is to replace the two existing 15 credit Primary English and Primary Mathematics modules with one 30 credit module (Primary English and Mathematics). This will allow for a new 6,000 word equivalent assignment (small scale action research) that will focus on assessing pupils' learning. This will take the form of a portfolio of pupils' work that the students will have marked and further annotated, a rationale for their approaches to assessing pupils' work and an evaluation of the impact of their marking and feedback on pupils' progress. The assignment for the 15 credit Curriculum Studies modules will be in the form of a poster presentation with a supporting written commentary – replacing the essay assignment.

We acknowledge your comment on the need for students to be more analytical in their writing and to adhere to the conventions of referencing their sources. We will give particular emphasis to this in the support for the first essay assignment next year. The point that you raise about students' understanding of original sources and journal articles and engaging in critical analysis will also be given greater emphasis during sessions aimed at supporting their assignment preparation. We will also focus on this when the students review assignments written by former students.

We are planning to make a number of changes to the 3-7 programme that ran for the first time last year. This review will not only address the issues that you raise (about the Child Development assignment, planning forms, lesson observation feedback forms, etc.) but will also consider the content and structure of the taught modules and the structure of school-based work. This process of review has begun and a revised module will be submitted to the School Taught Student Education Committee by the end of the autumn term.

We will continue to refine the content of the School-based Learning Tasks (SBLTs) to ensure that they are relevant and purposeful. Last year the SBLT booklet did contain an overview of the tasks for the express purpose of supporting planning, we will see that students are aware of this and that they share it with colleagues in school.

We understand the rationale for your suggestion to amend the how we assess and grade the students' school-based work. We have plans to trial a new framework, including weekly grading that draws on a wider range for evidence, in the second school placement this year.

Thank you again for your very positive comments and the very helpful guidance and advice that you have provided in this report. We look forward to seeing you again later in the year.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education



## 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):	National Curriculum
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Primary PGCE – EDUC5526M – Primary English, EDUC5528M – Primary Science, EDUC5527M – Primary Maths, EDUC5525M – Education and Professional Studies, EDUC3415 – Foundation Subject Studies, EDUC3420 – Primary Practical Teaching
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PGCE

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

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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*

NA

**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?*

NA

**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*

It has been a pleasure working with the primary PGCE team at Leeds over the last four years and the programme has undergone several changes. As I mentioned in my report last year, the outcome of the OfSTED inspection was completely unexpected and I am pleased to hear that the inspectors have since been back and have upgraded the course again. The inclusion of the cluster model of partnership has worked extremely well to strengthen the partnership and I hope that despite the decrease in numbers for next year, this will continue to be a real strength of the programme. A major development this year was the revised format for the school-based tasks that students complete. These have been refined to reflect changes in school and to support the students' developing awareness of classroom practice. There have been considerable changes made to the processes and paperwork involved in school-based work, by students and mentors. This has had a positive impact on progress that students have made during this time as they are explicitly aware how well they are meeting the Teachers' Standards. Over the years that I have been working as external examiner I have made suggestions to the team about the mode of assessment for the modules. Presently they are assessed via written assignments and my suggestion is that some or all of the intended learning outcomes could be assessed via different methods such as presentations (see more about this later in my report). There are going to be small numbers on the programme next year so if university regulations allow for changes within a short timeframe, next year would be a good opportunity to make any changes that the team are considering. Feedback from students throughout my time of working at Leeds has been consistently positive. Students recognise and appreciate the high level of enthusiasm and support from lecturers and school-based mentors. Particular strengths appear to be in English and maths where students have commented that they have been taught by enthusiastic and knowledgeable lecturers, who have provided invaluable support during their training.

## 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.*

I can confirm that the intended learning outcomes for this PGCE are appropriate for the award and they set the student teachers up well in preparation for their teaching career.

**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.*

I saw the complete set of assignments for six students and seventeen assignments that were below 50% and I can confirm that the assessed work which I reviewed was commensurate with post graduate teacher education programmes in other 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.*

Currently, all assessed work involves students writing essay style assignments, albeit often with the inclusion of specific school-based tasks in the appendix. Whilst these are used well to give students an opportunity to meet the ILOs, I suggest that other assessment modes such as poster presentations or PowerPoint presentations could give students an opportunity to demonstrate what they know in a mode which will be of benefit to them in their career and will enable the examiner to interrogate their understanding further.

**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 assignments currently work well to assess the ILO. Detailed guidance is provided to students and there is an appropriate range of marks. The best assignments included detailed and critical analysis of the literature and/or school-based practice which were integrated well. They also made relevant reference to experience in the classroom to support thoughtful conclusions and they were able to make reasonable suggestions of implications for practice. The weakest assignments often included numerous sweeping generalisations and tended to lack criticality to focus more on descriptions. They often had an incomplete reference list and demonstrated a lack of awareness of academic conventions. Many of them made limited reference to experiences in schools and work was not always proof read.

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

NA

**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.*

See previous comments

**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 course has been revised to reflect relevant changes to classroom practice. One such example is that the mathematics element now includes reference to work going on in Shanghai which is receiving significant national interest at the moment because of the international comparison tables.

**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

**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.*

Throughout my time as an external examiner for Leeds University I have been impressed with the high levels of organisation. I have always been sent the work and all related material (handbooks, grade distribution, assignment guidance etc) in sufficient time to be able to give my feedback to the team and arrangements for school visits have always run smoothly.

**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, please see 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?**

NA

**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 had a sample of all assignments from six students which enabled me to see how they developed over the course. I was also sent 17 assignments whose marks were below 50%. This ensured I had an appropriate picture of the cohort and I had grades for all assignments for all modules. Feedback was consistently detailed and should have enabled the students to make progress on their next piece of assessed work. However, it became clear during conversations with students that they paid little heed to these comments so the team may wish to consider implementing a revision to the process whereby the student has to include a response to this feedback before submitting the next piece of assessed work. I am unaware of the level of annotations on the scripts as I believe I was sent the version that the student had uploaded.

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

NA

**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 – all arrangements have been organised extremely efficiently to ensure that there is sufficient time to speak to groups of students, observe students teaching in school, speak to mentors and senior colleagues in school involved in the partnership and discussion with the course team. The recommendations made by the board were entirely satisfactory.

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

Yes

Other comments

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

All providers of initial teacher education are judged on the number of student teachers who meet the Teachers' Standards at the 'outstanding' level. I think there is potential to work with schools and students to ensure that they fully understand the grade descriptors that are being used. For example, if, at the interim stage of the final teaching placement, the mentor and student use the grade descriptors to discuss what s/he needs to do to meet them at the 'outstanding' level, there is possibly an increased chance that both mentor and student will work together to meet that target. This should include part two of the Teachers' Standards. This will give the student more opportunity to engage with the grade descriptors and some autonomy for shaping their training.

21 September 2015

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Dear <<>>

Thank you for your helpful and supportive report. We are pleased that you recognise a number of positive aspects of our Primary PGCE programmes, for example, the strengths of the English and mathematics modules and the enthusiasm and expertise of the tutors.

We will continue to develop the cluster model of partnership as we also appreciate the strengths of this form of partnership with schools. The changes we made to the school-based task framework have clearly had a positive impact, we, like you, have noted an improved trainee response to these tasks.

We haven't implemented any changes to the style of assignments for 2015-16. We were fully occupied with our re-inspection last year and it is now too late to implement changes. However, we have already agreed to diversify the style of assignments for 2016-17 and are in the process of implementing these changes. The main change is to replace the two existing 15 credit Primary English and Primary Mathematics modules with one 30 credit module (Primary English and Mathematics). This will allow for a new 6,000 word equivalent assignment (small scale action research) that will focus on assessing pupils' learning. This will take the form of a portfolio of pupils' work that the students will have marked and further annotated, a rationale for their approaches to assessing pupils' work and an evaluation of the impact of their marking and feedback on pupils' progress. The assignment for the 15 credit Curriculum Studies modules will be in the form of a poster presentation with a supporting written commentary – replacing the essay assignment. Your suggestion that students should be required to make a written response to the written feedback they receive from tutors on their essay assignments is one that we will consider. One way in which this might be done is to add another comment box to the feedback form.

We have plans to trial a new framework for assessing students' school-based work, including weekly grading that draws on a wider range for evidence, in the second school placement this year. We will look at how we develop this framework to ensure that students fully understand the grade descriptors that are being used. Our initial thoughts are that this will need to have a mentor training dimension and also be evident in the documentation. Getting more students to 'outstanding' is high on our priorities!

Thank you again for your very positive comments and the very helpful guidance and advice that you have provided, not only in this year's report, but in your previous reports. We have greatly valued your well-considered advice, support and encouragement, particularly over the last two years when we have faced significant challenges. We are pleased that you have enjoyed working with us over the past four years.

Yours sincerely

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Head of School of Education